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ABSTRACT

The teaching and understanding of Shakespeare are the subjects of these essays by (1) Louis B. Wright, who is concerned with the elements of Shakespearean plays which give them world-wide acceptance and timelessness, (2) Richard Hosley, who explores the use of stage curtains both today and when Shakespeare's plays were first produced, (3) G. L. Barber, who discusses Shakespeare's handling of farce in "The Comedy of Errors," (4) Stephen A. Shapiro, who examines the reversals and transformations in "Romeo and Juliet" from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, (5) Robert Ornstein, who suggests that in teaching "Hamlet," it is more important to comprehend the beauty and power of the whole dramatic action than to dissect the play, (6) Warren Taylor, who provides guides in the understanding of King Lear and his actions, (7) Harriet Dye, who concentrates on the theme of appearance and reality in "King Lear," (8) Louis Marder, who considers the problem of "method" in the teaching of Shakespeare, and (9) Gladys Veidemanis, who suggests ways of teaching Shakespeare in high school that will help students become aware of the complexity, richness, and universality of his drama. (This document previously announced as ED 033 949.) (JM)

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Shakespeare for Everyman

Louis B. Wright

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OF ALL THE WRITERS of the world, William Shakespeare has had the most universal recognition and acceptance, and today only the Bible is available in more languages than Shakespeare. In a report for the years 1958-1960, the Memorial Library in Birmingham, England, which makes a speciality of preserving translations of Shakespeare, announced that it possessed versions in seventy-four languages, including Albanian, Armenian, Bengali, Chinese, Croatian, Japanese, Georgian, Marathi, Punjabi, Tatar, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Xhosa. This listing is hardly complete. The Folger Library has received at least a fragment of Shakespeare in Pidgin English and has some other exotic versions not included in the foregoing list. Among a group of writers from Soviet Russia to visit the Folger Library was one from Kazakstan who was eager to see the First Folio version of *Twelfth Night* because he had translated that play into his native tongue. Currently one of the publishing ventures being promoted in Nasser's Egypt is a complete edition of Shakespeare in classical Arabic, the work of more than a score of scholars. If Nasser and the Egyptians still dislike the English because of Suez, their hostility does not extend to the man of Stratford. In addition to the magnificent definitive edition, they are also preparing an inexpensive paperback version to sell the masses of the Arab world.

Not only are reading versions of Shakespeare available in most tongues, but his plays are being constantly produced in the living theatre throughout the world. France has had a tremendous revival of interest in Shakespeare during the past decade with frequent summer festivals—in at least eight different places, for example, during the 1960 season. Germany has Shakespearean productions constantly running in its theatres. Japan has had frequent productions of Shakespeare by both professional and academic groups. Visitors to the hinterland of Russia and Siberia report popular productions of Shakespeare. One can see Shakespeare performed in various languages in India, and in large cities in India he sometimes may be heard in English.

The motion-picture industry long ago discovered that Shakespeare provided

scripts that could be used successfully and profitably, though Hollywood has not sufficiently exploited his possibilities. Sir Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* after more than a decade is still being shown in movie houses in this country. Incidentally, the head of the Rank Organization told me that Shakespeare on the screen goes better in America than in England. In Russia, screen productions of several of Shakespeare's plays have been popular. A Russian screen version of *King Lear* enjoyed a considerable run in England two or three years ago.

Shakespeare, on the screen, on the stage, or in print, apparently receives the approval of Soviet dialectians, who do not require him to masquerade as a party spokesman, though a recent Moscow radio program announced that Shakespeare's works have "a certain affinity to Socialist realism" and that Soviet writers shared a "kinship" with him. On both sides of the Iron Curtain Shakespeare has admirers, and he is one writer who is apparently above and beyond the turmoil of international politics.

The Critical Literature

As a theme for scholarly investigation and critical writing Shakespeare has no equal. It is true that Italian scholars and critics have put together a vast library about Dante; Spaniards have composed an immense literature on Cervantes; and Frenchmen write constantly about Molière, Racine, and Corneille. But for sheer mass of accumulated commentary, Shakespeare has exceeded them all. Many thousands of volumes in the Folger Library record the opinions of men and women who have been moved to look into almost every aspect of Shakespeare's life and writings. The quantity of this writing is enough to appall the most stout-hearted bibliographer, and the themes would appear to have exhausted human imagination. A recent critic has written that since 1877 *Hamlet* alone accounts for a publication on an average of once every twelve days.[1] Scholarly publications range from variorum editions, which attempt to summarize the more important writings about each play, to monographs on the most tangential subjects. For example, a certain Mrs. Blackburn wrote a book on *The Crows of Shakespeare* (Edinburgh, 1899) because, as she said in the preface, she had "always been interested in crows" and found frequent references to these birds in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's feathered creatures, curiously, have fascinated other commentators; a few years ago a Washingtonian printed a book on *The Birds of Shakespeare*. A learned Oxford don spent his declining years composing a large volume on Shakespeare's wild flowers. Shakespeare's dogs have found chroniclers, and even the fact that he had small interest in cats has been deemed worthy of published comment. Almost any book or article that can manage to twist something out of Shakespeare apparently can find an outlet. This fact makes life miserable for specialists in the field who think they must keep up with Shakespearean scholarship.

The great vogue of Shakespeare quite naturally produced a reaction, and we have seen in our time an increase in the anti-Shakespeareans, people determined to prove that Shakespeare the man was really of no importance, and that the plays attributed to him were written by someone else. These people are legion, and it has been estimated that one fifth of the people in lunatic asylums in Great Britain alone have delusions about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Many flourishing cults ardently promote the candidacy of this or that Elizabethan who has happened to attract their fancy. The oldest cult with the most distinguished names on its roster holds that Francis Bacon is the true author, just

[1] Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (New York, 1959), p. 3.

why, it is hard to comprehend, for one has only to read Bacon's efforts at poetical composition to see how far that prosy man was from Shakespeare's poetic style. Other cultists with equal ardency and with a similar dearth of facts or reason argue that the author was the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Oxford, Queen Elizabeth, King Edward VI, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Edward Dyer, the Earl of Hertford, a syndicate of writers headed by Ben Jonson, or almost any person living in the second half of the sixteenth century. The *Indianapolis Star* in 1956 ran a series of articles by a local antiquarian proving that Francis Bacon wrote not only Shakespeare but all of the works of Spenser, Milton, and a dozen others including that bit of immortal American verse, "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight." I mention this only to show to what lengths the anti-Shakespeareans may go. Neither reason nor chronology deters them, and if the readers of their arguments are sufficiently ignorant of facts or the laws of evidence, they may be fooled. Oddly enough, lawyers are particularly susceptible, and the *American Bar Association Journal* has published an incredible amount of nonsense to advocate the claims of the Earl of Oxford. Yet nobody has adduced one scrap of proof to show that Shakespeare was not the author of the plays attributed to him, nor has anyone found a particle of evidence that anyone else wrote them.

Several reasons, attributable to ignorance or snobbery, or both, may account for the zealous effort to disprove Shakespeare's authorship of his plays. The line of argument frequently runs that plays showing such vast learning and so great a knowledge of politics and court life could not have been written by a country yokel who left school at thirteen. The corollary to this argument is that the plays must have been written by a learned aristocrat or courtier. The fallacy of the argument is that the plays are not repositories of great learning, that they do not show an intimacy with court life and politics that could not have been picked up by any reasonably intelligent man, and that Shakespeare was not an ignorant country bumpkin. But the refutation of nonsense is not my purpose here. I mention it only to show how the enormous interest in Shakespeare's plays stimulated efforts to prove that the author had to be a superman greater than anyone who might be presumed to come from a country town in Warwickshire, even so enlightened and thriving a place as Stratford in the sixteenth century.

Why Shakespeare Endures

Our concern at the moment is to discover what elements these plays possess that have given them world-wide acceptance and continuity. In other words, why do men and women of all cultures and languages find in Shakespeare something that endures, something that they can make a part of their own culture? Why is he continually read in both his native English and in sundry tongues and dialects? What does he give to readers on various levels of cultivation?

The charge is sometimes made that Shakespeare is kept alive by a conspiracy of schoolteachers. I could wish that this were true, for it would prove that teachers are more effective than they are. On the contrary, I am certain that Shakespeare has survived in spite of what schoolteachers have done to him. I remember a teacher in the seventh grade who tried to make me memorize and recite Marc Antony's speech over dead Caesar with such ill success that I developed a complex against memorizing any verse whatever, and today I cannot recite three consecutive lines of Shakespeare or any other poet. So much for the teachers' conspiracy. Shakespeare does not stay alive because of academicians. Devoted scholars, it is true, lavish millions of man-hours trying to explain him, but

their efforts touch only peripherally the average nonacademic reader of the plays.

In approaching Shakespeare, we must remember that he wrote, not for a small group of intellectuals, but for everyman, from courtier to apprentice, for the man in the street, for anyone who could be lured to pay a penny or a tuppence to get into the theatre to see a play. Shakespeare wrote with one or both eyes on the box office. He wanted to be popular and he tried to write in such a manner and on such themes that everyman would welcome his efforts—and pay for them. We intellectuals are inclined to sneer at literature or drama written to produce money. We reserve our highest praise for precious works that few are willing to buy. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not here to sing praises of Hollywood or Madison Avenue's pandering to the lowest common denominator of entertainment. But I do want to insist that great art, literary or otherwise, is not necessarily the monopoly of a few anointed members of a priestcraft. Closet drama does not survive. The drama that has lived was written for the public theatre and had its performance there. The poetry and prose that have had the greatest influence on the world appealed, not to a small group, but to the many. *Don Quixote*, for example, is a part of every Spaniard's birthright, whatever his station in life. Even Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a difficult poem, is known to every Italian who can read and write, and even to some who cannot and have merely heard parts of it read to them. Similarly, Shakespeare wrote for a whole people, and his works have had a continuous life from his day to ours.

But merely writing for the public is not enough to make Shakespeare or anyone else live. He wrote with genius and he dealt with themes of universal interest and importance.

The fact of genius is completely ignored by the anti-Shakespeareans, who think the author must necessarily have been a man of immense learning. They believe that whoever wrote Shakespeare's plays had to go to the university to learn how. They forget that no great author, from Homer to Hemingway, ever learned his craft by taking Creative Writing 104 at X University. Writing is an art that can be developed and improved by practice, but the genius that produces great literature is something intangible and mysterious that occurs once in a great while. It is something that one must be born with. Shakespeare had it.

Shakespeare's Insight

How did Shakespeare's genius manifest itself? First of all, in the keenness of his perceptions, in his instinctive knowledge of the characteristics of men and women, in his close observation of the world around him, in his interpretation of that world to those who read his poetry, and in his capacity to transmute words into music. Of deep learning, Shakespeare had little. "Small Latin and less Greek," observed Ben Jonson. Shakespeare had such book learning, such knowledge of the classics, as he could pick up in the grammar school, the place where all Englishmen in this period got the fundamentals of classical knowledge. But he had something more important than book learning—an instinctive curiosity that led him to seek what he needed wherever he could find it: in conversations with town and country folk at Stratford, in talk with writers, soldiers, sailors, gallants, and wags who hung around the Mermaid Tavern in London, in the observation of men and nature, and in a variety of books from which he could mine a plot or a bit of history that he required. His powers of assimilation were enormous and he could weave disparate pieces into a dramatic fabric that was effective on the stage or in the hands of readers who might buy

a printed play. This capacity was evidence of genius, not of learning.

Shakespeare had extraordinary insight that enabled him to re-create for the stage characters who seemed to live and breathe as actual human beings recognizable by the audience. These characters were genuine men and women, not mere dramatis personae in a play. So real are some of his fictional characters that nineteenth-century critics talked about them as if they, like Henry IV or King John, had actually lived in history. They discussed their motivations and their backgrounds; they reconstructed their previous histories; and in short they treated them as if their veritable biographies existed. Not only were shadowy figures like Macbeth and King Lear given reality in time and space, but such people as Shylock, Romeo and Juliet, and Othello were treated as if they too were realities. The tendency has not yet ended, and in a burst of recent interest in Shakespeare's theology—if any—commentators have been debating as to whether Shylock was saved for a Christian heaven by being forcibly baptized. Juliet's house in Verona is now a tourist attraction and one can stand and stare at the veritable balcony to which Romeo climbed. An American Fulbright professor in France chose to give a series of lectures on "The organization of the Italian army in the time of Othello," which so incensed an English scholar who heard him that he wrote back: "Heaven help us—what was the time of Othello (he is an invented character in Cinthio's mid-sixteenth-century novel)? What was the Italian army then? (There was no Italy!) And what the devil has all this to do with what Shakespeare meant human beings to get out of *Othello*?" However misguided the poor Fulbright lecturer, he had come to think of Othello as a veritable historical figure. To many of us, I am happy to say, Falstaff is vividly real down to the last spattering of ale on his doublet. Shakespeare had the capacity for creating characters who lived and breathed and remained forever in the consciousness of men who saw or read his plays. Alexander Dumas once exclaimed that "Shakespeare is the poet who created most after God!"[2] If not all critics will agree with this idolatrous hyperbole, few will deny to Shakespeare an extraordinary creative genius that gives life to the men and women who populate his plays.

Because his characters give the illusion of reality, the spectator at a Shakespearean play, or the reader, is able to identify himself with people whom he sees. He may not expect to have a faithless wife, but he can comprehend the tortures of jealousy suffered by Othello; he may not be so foolish as Lear, but he knows how "sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." He may be now old and decrepit, but he once knew the joy of young love and could utter moonstruck lyrics to his Juliet as well as any Romeo; and every man, more than one observer has commented, has seen himself in Hamlet. "Hamlet is universal," Miss Rebecca West has written, and she quotes Turgenev: "We all sympathize with Hamlet because there is not one of us but recognizes in the prince one or more of our own characteristics."[3] And a recent critic writing about Hamlet comments: "Coleridge, whose public pronouncements did more than anything else to crystallize the notion of Shakespeare's hero as an impractical dreamer, goes on to comment revealingly in his *Table-Talk:* 'I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so.' This candid aside is typically subjective. . . . The clearer-sighted Hazlitt formulated the principle involved, when he remarked: 'It is we who are Hamlet.'

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[3] Rebecca West, *The Court and the Castle* (New Haven, 1957), p. 12.

. . . Hamlet has a smack of each of us, if we may say so."[4]

Shakespeare concerned himself with elemental emotions and themes of broad human interests so that whatever may be the setting of his plays, they are really timeless and universal in appeal. Bernard Shaw, who delighted in annoying Shakespeare idolaters, once commented that both Shakespeare and Molière owed their reputations to the fact that they dealt in universals instead of more restricted interest. Shaw expressed it pungently: "The reason why Shakespeare and Molière are always well spoken of and recommended to the young is that their quarrel is really a quarrel with God for not making men better. If they had quarrelled with a specified class of persons with incomes of four figures for not doing their work better, or for doing no work at all, they would be denounced as seditious, impious, and profligate corrupters of morality."[5] Shaw believed that foolish idolatry of Shakespeare prevented our comprehending the universal and human qualities that give his writings permanence. "We are disposed to agree," he once commented, "that we are making too much of a fetish of our Swan. He was the greatest intellect we have produced, but the tendency to regard him as above criticism is bad. Shakespeare is supreme because he embodied most completely the whole range of emotions. But they were human emotions, and his greatness is due to that fact."[6] And with consummate egotism Shaw took credit for a new understanding in the world of Shakespeare's infinite humanity and capacity to interpret human emotions. "When I began to write," he boasted, "William was a divinity and a bore. Now he is a fellow-creature."[7]

But a fellow-creature with a difference, for Shakespeare outdistanced Shaw and all of his other fellow-creatures in the writing trade by his capacity for understanding human nature and plumbing the depths of human emotions. Such capacity comes from some God-given insight, not from school learning. His works provide a storehouse of human experience from which we all may benefit vicariously and perhaps acquire wisdom. Even though his characters may derive from some dim and distant past of British history, or from his own imagination, their emotional experiences are genuine and frequently more vivid and comprehensible than those of our own contemporaries, or those seen on the stage today, for Shakespeare is not content to deal with just a fraction of a man or woman, or to concentrate upon some oddity or eccentricity of human behavior. He is concerned with the whole man or the whole woman, even when his theme is a particular emotion or a particular set of actions.

The timeliness of Shakespeare's drama was not achieved by avoiding topical or contemporary interests, but by treating these interests in such a way that they transcend mere momentary concerns and become the observations of a wiser commentator upon life. In the hands of a lesser person, *Othello* might have been a dramatized report of a sensational wife-murder, set in Venice or London or anywhere, but it would have been little more than a piece of dramatized sensation. In Shakespeare's treatment, *Othello* is a study of the corrosion by jealousy of the soul of a simple and essentially noble man. Fortunately Shakespeare lived before Freud, and his play is not littered with obvious symbols or the technical jargon of Freudian psychology; instead, it has the penetration that comes from the observation and understanding of human nature in any age.

In a wise and witty essay entitled "Why the French Need Shakespeare,"

[4] Levin, *The Question of Hamlet*, pp. 5-6.
[5] Edwin Wilson, *Shaw on Shakespeare* (New York, 1961), p. xiv.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

Jean-Louis Barrault, the actor-producer, has remarked that Shakespeare is significant today because he wrote for us as well as for his own time—because he did not retire into an ivory tower to devote himself to art for art's sake. "No," says Barrault, "He mingles with the crowd. He restores the poet to his true function, that of observer. . . . Drawing his themes from real life, he sets the style for his age. . . . He takes no sides, and this is of supreme importance. Even in times like ours, with the political virus so widespread, who could place Shakespeare in any political party? . . . Despite the few undeniable bits of chauvinism which can offend a few overticklish Frenchmen, Shakespeare's art always knows how to remain above politics. Even in his most 'official' plays he can avoid vulgar propaganda. He never swerves from his steady lucidity. No politics, no propaganda, no moral lectures. He answers only to justice. And this is the main reason why this poet is a great playwright from whom we can learn. Draw upon topical themes; look for the style of our age; mingle with the crowd; remain an observer; avoid political militancy; resist all propaganda pressures; restore morality to the rank it deserves; and serve only justice. This, if you like, is Shakespeare's social message."[8] Thus a great French actor and producer of drama describes the message that Shakespeare has for his own countrymen today.

Shakespeare's Word Music

For the English-speaking world, Shakespeare has another powerful appeal, and that is the music of his words. No other poet in our literature has managed to create so much magic with words and to sustain the spell over such a body of writing. This magic is lost in translation. As Barrault points out, "Shakespeare's arrival in France begins with a crime. While crossing the Channel, he is forced to undergo surgery that smacks of vandalism: he is shorn of his verbal style." The Germans, it is true, sometimes claim that the Tieck-Schlegel translation is an improvement on Shakespeare, but we can credit that statement merely to arrogance. No translation, however good, can capture the music and evocative quality of Shakespeare's verse. Shaw, a distinguished music critic as well as a dramatist, maintained that Shakespeare was more successful in achieving musical effects in words than any other English poet. His power, Shaw wrote, lay in his "enormous command of word-music,"[9] in rhythms, pauses, arrangement of vowels and consonants, the choice of words, and the flow of his sentences.

This capacity, exhibited by Shakespeare, again is something with which he was born; he could not have acquired such a talent in the classroom, though he could have developed his skill by reading and by imitating other writers who had the quality, as he did in his early work. But essentially poetry of Shakespeare's grade is a gift, not an acquired trait. I am not being subversive of any advanced composition courses that may be offered. I am merely saying that we need not expect such courses to turn out geniuses. They are born.

Many essays have been written on the way in which Shakespeare achieved his poetic effects, and we cannot in a brief interval do justice to this topic. But we would do well to remember that he attained much of the music, color, and vividness of his verse through the choice of simple words and the use of lucid imagery based on the observation of nature. Shakespeare's muse was not a contortionist. The poet never strained and twisted his words for metaphysical effect. His diction is clear and straightforward, and his figures of speech derive, not from classical textbooks, but from

[8] Jean-Louis Barrault, "Why the French Need Shakespeare," *Horizon*, VI (1961), pp. 102-09.

[9] Wilson, *Shaw on Shakespeare*, p. xx.

the simple things his own eyes and ears had taught him, from memories of the fields and woods of Warwickshire. There is nothing artificial and contrived about Shakespeare's imagery. Like his characterizations, his imagery is based on English life and English scenes that he knew. And since it is genuine and true to life in any age, it evokes memories and scenes in us and stirs our imaginations to re-create for us pictures hidden in our own subconscious recollections.

Occasionally Shakespeare let his imagination go for the sheer pleasure of conjuring up an imaginary picture, as in Mercutio's description of Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet* (I, iv):

She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;
Her collars, of the moonshine's wat'ry beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film;
Her wagoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazelnut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight;
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
O'er ladies lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as 'a lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice.

In this passage you will notice there are no long words, no references to gods and goddesses on Olympus, no abstract terms, no contorted metaphors, no obscure allusions. But instead, you discover references to crickets, grasshoppers, squirrels, hazelnuts, gnats, spider webs, wagon-spokes, a wagoner, a parson dreaming of his tithe-pig, a lawyer of his fee, and a courtier thinking of some favorable suit—nothing in short beyond the experience of a Warwickshire man who had come up to London. But with what consummate artistry has Shakespeare fitted his words and images together to make a vivid bit of musical verse. Shakespeare's poetry provides us with an art gallery and a symphony concert all in one. More than that, it is created for ordinary mortals who are not required to have some special revelation before they can understand it.

One should hasten to add, however, that not all of Shakespeare's poetry is transparently easy. There are difficult passages, to be sure, but he is never deliberately obscure, and the difficulty usually comes from our unfamiliarity with words and terms that may have changed their meanings in the course of the centuries.

Shakespeare's Concern for Significance

Not only did Shakespeare seek to write lucidly but he sought to say some-

thing of significance. If one should object that this is always the purpose of the serious writer, let him contemplate the work of many of our contemporary poets and dramatists. Someone has said that modern writers at times are bores because they choose "to worry a bone of triviality." Shakespeare's writing is never trivial. Though he may be occasionally careless and slipshod, for even Homer nods, nowhere does he betray a mediocre mind content with commonplace thought and commonplace expression. He had something to say, and he cast his thoughts in the best and clearest language that he knew. This helps to explain why his works have retained their vitality through the centuries. We read them because they have substance and meaning, and we feel that we are not wasting our time, for most of us require something more of our reading than mere entertainment. In Shakespeare we find studies of man in his environment that inspire, stimulate, instruct, or delight us. Horace insisted that the function of poetry was to teach and to delight, and Shakespeare fulfills both functions.

Perhaps we ought to pause a moment to emphasize the importance of delight in poetry, in sheer enjoyment, in the pleasure of laughter. I am afraid that too many modern poets give the impression that poetry is work for an undertaker's assistant. They set about their tasks as solemnly as a parcel of funeral directors, and they would sooner be seen in public in their underwear than suggest that humor has any place in poetry. It is the fashion today to be grim, disillusioned, unhappy, or morbid. The Elizabethan stage was not averse to morbid themes, it is true, and Shakespeare contributed his share, as in *Titus Andronicus,* for example, but morbidity was never a staple of diet with Shakespeare or other Elizabethan poets. They knew how to laugh with gusto. And they could poke fun at some of their most cherished notions and doctrines. Falstaff's dissertation on honor, for example, in *Henry IV, Pt. I* (V, i) is an antidote to Hotspur's high-flown sentiments, the sort of cant that superpatriots like to mouth:

"Well, 'tis no matter; honor pricks me on. Yea, but how if honor prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honor set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honor hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honor? A word. What is that word honor? What is that honor? Air—a trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honor is a mere scutcheon—and so ends my catechism." Shakespeare was not ridiculing honor: he was laughing at pretentiousness, at the cant that vain men so often display when they talk of high sentiments. His common sense pierces through sham, and laughter banishes hokum.

Shakespeare in Early America

Historically, Shakespeare has had a tremendous impact upon American taste, American theatrical history, and upon our culture generally. If we could take time to investigate Shakespeare's interest for Americans we would go a long way toward discovering why Shakespeare for more than four and a half centuries has been both a dramatist and a poet for Everyman.

From fairly early in our history, Americans have looked upon Shakespeare with particular enthusiasm, because Shakespeare offers something for every reader and every spectator of his plays. Miss Esther Cloudman Dunn in her book, *Shakespeare in America* (New York, 1939), draws a parallel between the relatively crude taste of the American frontier and the taste of the groundlings at the Globe and concludes that the melo-

drama of *Macbeth* and *Richard III* could not fail to please both groups. That is not the whole story, of course. On every successive frontier in America there were some sophisticates, some cultivated people who got from Shakespeare much more than melodrama. But there is no denying that melodrama and oratory appealed to frontier audiences, as they appealed to Elizabethan audiences.

During the colonial period Shakespeare was frequently seen in the little American theaters, in Williamsburg, Charleston, New York, and later in Philadelphia. He even helped to crack the obdurate Puritanism of New England, though he might have to be disguised as a "moral lecture." *Othello*, for example, could be presented as a moral lecture against jealousy. We should remember that latent hostility to the theater lingered for a long time in America, and that Shakespeare, regarded already as "improving" and "moral," was a useful entering wedge for other theatrical entertainment. This hostility was such that as late as 1762, when the English actor-manager David Douglass opened in Providence a "Histrionic Academy" (a euphemism for a theater), a pious mob very nearly lynched the company and had to be dispersed with the threat of cannon fire.

The favorite plays in the colonial theater were *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Indeed, *Richard III*, usually in Colley Cibber's adaptation, was so popular that it was sometimes used to entertain Indian dignitaries. In 1767 Cherokee Indian chiefs, brought to New York for a powwow, were entertained with *Richard III*. Instances of Indians being honored by Shakespearean performances are not infrequent. Contemporary records show that in 1752 at Williamsburg the "Emperor and Empress" of the Cherokee nation enjoyed a performance of *Othello*. In Baltimore in 1818 a theatrical manager improved on Shakespeare a bit by interspersing in his run of the plays a dance of Wyandot Indian chiefs.

Indians, it should be pointed out, were not invariably impressed by Shakespeare. At least on one occasion in the 1840's a roving Seminole band attacked a traveling Shakespearean company in Florida, killed two of them, and captured their wardrobe. The Seminoles promptly went on the warpath dressed in costumes intended for *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*.

On the frontier, as Americans pushed their empire westward, Shakespeare was cherished as an entertainer and revered as a prophet for his wisdom. Traveling elocution teachers found paying audiences to listen to them recite such passages as the "Seven Ages of Man" from *As You Like It* and Portia's speech on mercy from *The Merchant of Venice*. Memorizing and reciting the jewels of Shakespeare became an evidence of culture. This manifestation was not academically inspired but developed directly from folk interest. If prairie politicians and editors of country newspapers could quote Shakespeare they were written down as enlightened bearers of the torch of civilization, and some of them might be elected to public office on the strength of their quoted eloquence.

The performance of Shakespearean plays reached the Middle West before the railroads. Traveling companies of actors penetrated the new country and gave their plays in barns, tents, and in lofts over stores. In 1833 a "Floating Theater" on a flatboat carried Shakespeare down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. *Othello* and *Hamlet* were the favorites on this showboat, with *Richard III* close behind. Four hundred and thirty-three performances of Shakespeare were recorded in this frontier zone before the railroads reached it.

Shakespeare followed the settler wherever he went. Soon after the Forty-Niners reached California, Shakespearean troupers were appearing in San Francisco by night and prospecting for gold when

they could. When professional players failed to appear, amateurs often attempted Shakespeare. Costuming such plays was a problem and in one California production of *The Merchant of Venice* Portia appeared dressed in sombrero and overalls, the normal costume of the local justice of the peace. That was the only judge's apparel known to the local company.

Reading Shakespeare in these frontier communities provided both instruction and delight, "escape" from the crudities of daily existence, and edification. Shakespeare was second only to the Bible in ubiquity and favor. During the settlement of the Middle West, such towns as Cincinnati and St. Louis soon had bookstores that prominently advertised Shakespeare. In 1834, when St. Louis was still a rough staging area for emigrants pushing westward, one bookstore there was advertising seven different editions of Shakespeare. Besides these editions of the plays, anthologies of choice selections were available, and from these anthologies quotations passed into the common stock of our language. Even yet some people derive their principal pleasure at a Shakespearean play from recognizing familiar quotations.

The goal of many literary clubs, organized by men and women on the frontier who were determined to reproduce the best of the civilization that they had left, was the reading and enjoyment of Shakespeare. Not many communities in the West were too barbaric or remote to have a few citizens who treasured their editions of Shakespeare. Women's clubs particularly—and a good word ought to be said for these worthy women—frequently devoted themselves to reading Shakespeare and teaching their children and husbands to love the dramatist. Even in so remote a spot in the 1880's as Weeping Water, Nebraska, the Zetetic Club devoted two years to the study of Shakespeare. At about the same time, the Woman's Club of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, was also ardently pursuing a course of Shakespearean reading. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

I have dwelt on Shakespeare on the frontier to emphasize my point: that Shakespeare had something for everybody. It is true that he had taken on a talismanic value. His was a name to conjure with. But why had it acquired that quality? Not merely because some high priest of learning or literature had pronounced Shakespeare significant. High priests, of course, had worshipped in his name, but there was more to the popularity of Shakespeare than that. Readers on all levels, as I have tried to show, received from Shakespeare something of substance, something of value. What they received depended upon what they had to take to Shakespeare, but they all got something: entertainment, inspiration, elevation, a sense of contact with a mind worth while. For them Shakespeare was not a highbrow poet whose works were just to be kept on the parlor table. He was instead a participant in life as they knew it.

Nobody in his right mind will pretend that every line that Shakespeare wrote is as important as Holy Writ, or that he is without dull spots. But most of Shakespeare still lives for us, even though some passages require notes of explanation to make them comprehensible today. He lives, let me repeat, because he wrote about fundamental matters that concern us all, in every age and country. He wrote about them lucidly and importantly, rarely wasting ink on triviality, and never pompously obscuring his meaning with the jargon of the poetic trade. And he managed always to convey a sense of truth to his revelation of all aspects of life. Given a set of circumstances, Shakespeare, we feel, explains the way things inevitably happen. In his poetic drama we receive instruction and we experience delight. This happy combination is the highest achievement of a writer.

Shakespearian Stage Curtains: Then and Now

RICHARD HOSLEY

IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY the production of Shakespeare on the proscenium-arch stage has undergone a revolution set in motion by the theory and practice of such directors as William Poel, Edward Gordon Craig, and Harley Granville-Barker.[1] There are many aspects of this revolution, but certainly one of the more important—if not the most important—has been the substitution of a single set (more or less stylized) for the series of different sets (more or less realistic) which were the hallmark of Victorian production. Thus, where a typical production of the 1890's would involve, let us say, ten, fifteen, or perhaps even twenty drops of the proscenium-arch curtain (and almost as many shifts of scenery), a typical production of the 1960's eliminates curtain-drops entirely during the action of the play, the proscenium curtain being used only to start and end the play, and before and after the intermission. The resultant gains in speed and concentration are almost universally commended—not to mention the savings in expense.

Now the Victorian and mid-twentieth-century uses of a proscenium-arch curtain (themselves to be distinguished one from the other) should be sharply distinguished from the use of curtains occasionally required in the original texts of Elizabethan plays. The Elizabethan stage, being an "open" stage,[2] did not have a proscenium curtain. The statement is a truism today, but it was not always so, for Edmund Malone, writing toward the end of the eighteenth century, was able to speak of "the principal curtains that hung in the front of the stage," as distinguished from other curtains, at the back of the stage, used in effecting occasional "discoveries."[3] Malone's assumption of a curtain at the front of the Elizabethan stage was astonishingly erroneous, but his assumption of curtains at the back of the stage seems to have been essentially sound. The distinction he makes is precisely the one I am suggesting between the modern proscenium-arch curtain (whether used in the fashion of 1890 or of 1960) and the tiring-house hangings (as they may be called) of the Elizabethan stage.

What was the nature of the Elizabethan tiring-house hangings? The famous De Wit drawing of the Swan Playhouse (c. 1596) does not show hangings, though we know that they were occasionally employed at that theater: presumably hangings were occasionally fitted up along the tiring-house facade, in front of the two large doorways depicted in the drawing. But our other three pictorial sources for the Elizabethan stage do show hangings.[4]

[1] A good account of the movement has been written by William A. Armstrong, "The Art of Shakespearean Production in the Twentieth Century," *Essays and Studies*, 15 (1962), 74-87.

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[2] See Richard Southern, *The Open Stage and the Modern Theatre in Research and Practice* (1953).

[3] "An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage," in *The Malone-Boswell Variorum Shakespeare* (1821), I, 88, 78.

[4] The four pictures are reproduced by C. Walter Hodges in *The Globe Restored* (1953).

The *Wits* frontispiece, the latest in point of time (1662), shows, at the back of an open stage, hangings fitted up in front of the single doorway of a hall screen.[5] This evidence supports the proposed interpretation of how hangings might have been fitted to the Swan tiring-house facade, and it also aids understanding of our other two pictorial sources. The first of these is the *Roxana* vignette (1632), which shows hangings at the back of an open stage but no tiring-house doors. The doors may have been outside the area depicted, but it seems to me more likely that they were simply behind the hangings—as one door evidently is in the *Wits* frontispiece and as two doors would be at the Swan if hangings were fitted up along the tiring-house facade in the manner suggested. The last pictorial source is the *Messalina* vignette (1640). Here the problem of interpretation is much the same as in the *Roxana* vignette: presumably the tiring-house doors are behind the hangings shown at the back of the stage. However that may be, in the tiring-house hangings pictured in three of our four pictorial sources we have strong evidence confirming Malone's assumption of curtains at the back of the Elizabethan stage. Presumably these correspond to the "curtains" or "hangings" occasionally required by the original texts of Elizabethan plays.

What was the nature of the Elizabethan discovery? The question can be answered from the evidence of any group of thirty or forty Elizabethan plays, for the reason that, as is revealed by a study of all extant Elizabethan plays produced before 1642, production techniques in this respect remained essentially the same in all periods and in all playhouses. Shakespeare's plays afford convenient illustration since they are generally familiar and since most readers will have seen some of them in production.

The first point to be made is that discoveries are required in surprisingly few of Shakespeare's plays: in only nine out of the canonical thirty-eight, or in about one play out of four.

A second point, closely connected with the first, is that those of Shakespeare's plays which require discoveries do so extremely rarely. In each of eight plays only one discovery is required, in the ninth play only three. (1) In *Romeo and Juliet* the heroine is discovered when Romeo "*opens the tomb*" (V.iii). Presumably he opens a pair of double-hung doors like those pictured in the De Wit drawing of the Swan ("Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open"). Juliet is reclining upon some such property as a sarcophogus or coffin. (2) In *The Merchant of Venice* (the only Shakespearian play to require more than one discovery) Portia's caskets are thrice discovered by an opening of "the curtains" or "the curtain" (II.vii, II.ix, III.ii). Presumably the caskets rest upon a table. (3) In *1 Henry IV* Falstaff is discovered by an opening of "the arras" (II.iv). He is asleep, either seated in a chair or reclining on a bench. (4) In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the terrified Simple is discovered in hiding when Dr. Caius opens the door of his "closet" (I.iv). (5) In *Troilus and Cressida* Achilles and Patroclus are discovered, apparently by the opening of curtains (III.iii). They are standing in the "entrance" of Achilles' "tent." (6) In *Pericles* the protagonist is presumably discovered when he reappears after his illness (V.i). He is asleep, either seated in a chair or reclining on a day-bed. (7) In *The Winter's Tale* Hermione is discovered by an opening of "the curtain" (V.iii). She is standing "*like a statue*," apparently on a small platform. (8) In *The Tempest* Prospero "*discovers*" Ferdinand and Miranda, as within his "cell," "*playing at chess*"

[5] On the hall screen as a source of the Elizabethan tiring-house facade, see my "Origins of the Shakespearian Playhouse," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), 29-39.

(V.i). And (9) in *Henry VIII* the King discovers himself by drawing "*the curtain*" (II.ii). After the discovery he "*sits reading pensively*."

A third point is that the Shakespearian discovery may be effected not only by the opening of curtains but also by the opening of a door or doors.

A fourth point is that the texts occasionally require the discovery (whether by an opening of curtains or of doors) to be effected by an actor on stage. In one instance the discovered player himself manipulates the curtains.

A fifth point is that, since no discovery is of more than two actors or of a larger property than a bench or table or sarcophogus, the space behind the curtains or doors need not be very large. A width of six feet and a depth of three would suffice amply for the eleven Shakespearian discoveries noted.

A sixth point is that the space discovered is not used as a playing area—that is to say, the actors do not engage in movement, laterally or in depth, within the discovery-space, as they do within the frame of a proscenium-arch stage. In a Shakespearian discovery the actor or actors are simply *posed*, in what is essentially a *tableau vivant;* then, after discovery, they almost invariably leave the discovery space and come forward on to the stage. (Alternatively, as in the case of Portia's caskets or the sleeping Falstaff, the effect is that of a still life, the objects or actor discovered remaining within the discovery-space until hidden by a closing of the curtains.) This technique of "flowing out" of the discovery-space is usually indicated by a later requirement of the dialogue that the discovered actor or actors, when they come to exit, walk off the stage.

A seventh point is that the Shakespearian discovery is essentially a "show": a sudden revelation of an important or interesting person or object, in a significant situation or at a characteristic activity. Furniture may be involved in the discovery, but only in support (as it were) of the discovered actor or object: the player is the thing. In no instance do we find Elizabethan tiring-house hangings being used merely for the convenience of pre-setting furniture out of sight of the audience, as the proscenium-arch curtain usually is in productions involving realistic sets.

And an eighth point is enforced by the special evidence of *Hamlet*. This play does not require a discovery, but it does require an "arras" behind which Polonius hides in order to spy on Hamlet (III.iv). Hamlet stabs Polonius through the arras, and Polonius then apparently falls forward on the stage, for Hamlet later lugs the guts into the neighbor room: "*Exit Hamlet tugging in Polonius.*" Thus hangings are available, but they are not used for the purpose of discovery. From this evidence (and *Hamlet* is representative of a large class of Elizabethan plays) we may draw the important inference that Elizabethan tiring-house hangings were not designed for the express purpose of effecting discoveries.[6]

At first glance the Shakespearian discovery as defined in this essay may strike the reader as strange. But if it does, this will be, I suspect, because he approaches the problem of understanding the original production of Shakespeare's plays from the point of view of modern production upon a replica Elizabethan stage equipped with an "inner stage." If the reader will tentatively set aside the theory of an "inner stage," he will find, I believe, upon further consideration,

[6]This inference and one or two other considerations militate against the theory of a curtained structure ("booth," "pavilion," or whatever) set up against the tiring-house facade. I have discussed various aspects of the Elizabethan discovery-space in "The Discovery-Space in Shakespeare's Globe," *Shakespeare Survey 12* (1959), pp. 35-46; "An Approach to the Elizabethan Stage," *Renaissance Drama*, 6 (1963), 72-78; and "The Staging of Desdemona's Bed," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14 (1963), 57-65.

that the Shakespearian discovery as here defined is not strange at all but quite familiar. I would attempt to establish this proposition by reference to two classes of play in modern production upon a proscenium-arch stage.

The first class consists of Shakespeare's plays themselves. Here, as I have pointed out earlier, some use is made of the proscenium curtain, though considerably less nowadays than in Victorian times. The point, of course, is that most of Shakespeare's plays, when so produced, do not require—and indeed are not usually furnished with—any "secondary" curtains. These are precisely the twenty-eight Shakespearian plays which have not been mentioned in this essay. But secondary curtains or a discovering door must be—and indeed usually are—furnished for production of the ten Shakespearian plays cited above, those whose original texts seem definitely to call either for a discovery or for the use of hangings without discovery (as in *Hamlet*). These secondary curtains are fitted up somewhere in the stage set, within the proscenium arch, and they are used in exactly the same fashion as I have suggested was done in the case of Elizabethan tiring-house hangings.

The second class of play considerably enlarges our range of evidence. It consists of modern plays written and first produced in the late nineteenth century and in the twentieth century—plays, for example, by Ibsen, Wilde, Strindberg, Giraudoux, and Camus. All the plays of these writers are usually produced on a proscenium-arch stage, and all usually employ the proscenium curtain at beginning and end of the performance, between the acts, and sometimes even between scenes. Most of these plays (like most of Shakespeare's) do not require secondary curtains. But a very few of them (like a few of Shakespeare's) once or twice require curtains or a discovering door in addition to the proscenium curtain—curtains or a door placed somewhere in the stage set, within the proscenium arch. (1) Camus, *Caligula* (1938, produced 1945): "*A room in the imperial palace. Before the curtain rises a rhythmic clash of cymbals and the thudding of a drum have been coming from the stage, and when it goes up we see a curtained-off booth, with a small proscenium* [i.e. stage] *in front, such as strolling players use at country fairs. . . .* HELICON: . . . Now watch with all your eyes. [*He draws aside the curtain. Grotesquely attired as Venus,* CALIGULA *beams down on them from a pedestal.*]" (Act III). This discovery may be compared with that of Hermione as a statue in *The Winter's Tale*. (2) Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler* (1890): "*A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. . . .* HEDDA *goes into the back room and draws the curtains. . . . A shot is heard within. . . .* TESMAN. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again. [*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by* MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies stretched on the sofa lifeless*" (Act IV). This discovery may be compared with that of Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, or of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, or (to go beyond Shakespeare) of the body of Horatio in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. (3) Ibsen, *Rosmersholm* (1886): "JOHANNES ROSMER'S *study. . . . At the back is a doorway with a curtain drawn back, leading to his bedroom. . . .* REBECCA *draws the curtain over the doorway, then tidies up the room a little. . . . She goes out left. . . . The curtain at the back of the room is drawn back.* REBECCA *appears in the doorway*" (Act II). This discovery may be compared with that of Achilles and Patroclus in *Troilus and Cressida*. (4) Strindberg, *The Ghost Sonata* (1907): "*Inside the Round Room. . . . On the left of the*

stove is the door to a cupboard, papered like the wall. . . . BENGTSSON. *. . . He points to the papered door.* She sits in there. . . . Do you want to have a look at her? *He opens the door.* There she is. *The figure of the* COLONEL'S WIFE *is seen, white and shrivelled into a* MUMMY. *. . . He closes the papered door*" (Scene II). This discovery may be compared with that of Simple in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. (5) Giraudoux, *Tiger at the Gates* (*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, 1935): "*A palace enclosure. . . . In the middle a monument, the Gates of War. They are wide open. . . . During the closing of the Gates,* ANDROMACHE *takes little* POLYXENE *aside. . . . (The Gates of War slowly open, to show* HELEN *kissing* TROILUS) . . . THE CURTAIN FINALLY FALLS" (Act II). This discovery (Giraudoux' verb is "*découvrent*") may be compared with that of Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest*, or of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, or (to go once again beyond Shakespeare) of the murdered king in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus.

In these five "modern" plays, secondary curtains or discovering doors are used in much the same manner as in mid-twentieth-century productions of Shakespeare upon a proscenium-arch stage, and also as in original productions of Shakespeare upon an "open" stage backed by hangings fitted up along the tiring-house facade.

One other use of a secondary curtain on the proscenium-arch stage may be cited. It occurs in Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892): "*Lord Darlington's rooms. . . . At the back of the stage a curtain is drawn across the window. . . .* LADY WINDERMERE *hides herself behind the curtain. . . .* LORD WINDERMERE: You scoundrel! I'll not leave your room till I have searched every corner of it! What moves behind that curtain? *(Rushes towards the curtain C.)* MRS. ERLYNNE *(enters behind R.):* Lord Windermere! LORD WINDERMERE: Mrs. Erlynne! *Every one starts and turns round.* LADY WINDERMERE *slips out from behind the curtain and glides from the room L. . . .* ACT DROP" (Act III). Here a curtain has been fitted up in a window of the set, within the proscenium arch; but it is used only for Lady Windermere to hide behind, not for the purpose of effecting a discovery. This use of a curtain may be compared with that of the "arras" behind which Polonius hides in *Hamlet*.

I have cited staging parallels with modern drama, partly in order to suggest that Shakespearian discoveries are by no means so unusual as they may at first glance appear, partly in order to clarify the proposed distinction between the proscenium-arch curtain and Elizabethan tiring-house hangings. If that distinction is granted, it becomes clear that the curtains of an "inner stage," as used in modern productions of Shakespeare upon replica Elizabethan stages, are in effect a combination of both. Inner-stage curtains serve, in those Elizabethan plays which indeed require a discovery or some special use of curtains, the two separate functions of tiring-house hangings at the back of an "open" stage (to which the "outer stage" of a replica Elizabethan stage corresponds), and of a drop-curtain at the front of a proscenium-arch stage (to which the "inner stage" of a replica Elizabethan stage corresponds)—but, a proscenium-arch drop-curtain *as this was used in the 1890's*. Thus the general theatrical situation today is an extremely ironic one. Productions of Shakespeare upon a proscenium-arch stage are closer to the style of original production upon an "open" stage backed by hangings than are productions upon a replica Elizabethan stage equipped with an "inner stage"; and productions upon a replica Elizabethan stage are in a style recognizably like that of the Victorian theater, uninfluenced by the principles and practice of William Poel.

Shakespearian Comedy in *The Comedy of Errors*

C. L. Barber

Mr. R. A. Foakes, in his excellent Arden edition of the *Comedy of Errors*, remarks that producers of the play have too often regarded it "as a short apprentice work in need of improvement, or as mere farce, 'shamelessly trivial' as one reviewer in *The Times* put it." Accordingly they have usually adapted it, added to it, fancied it up. But in its own right, as its stage popularity attests, it is a delightful play. Shakespeare outdoes Plautus in brilliant, hilarious complication. He makes the arbitrary reign of universal delusion the occasion for a dazzling display of his dramatic control of his characters' separate perspectives, keeping track for our benefit of just what each participant has experienced and the conclusions he or she draws from it. One must admit that the way the confusion is elaborated by wrangling with words is sometimes tedious, especially on the stage, where the eye cannot assist the ear in following the young poet's fascination with manipulating language. But most of the time one can enjoy the wonderful verbal energy with which he endows his characters as they severally struggle to put together and express their baffling encounters. There is a great deal of good fun in seeing how each distorts and simplifies, and sometimes lies a little, to make sense of the crazy situation (and often to draw a little advantage from it on the side).

The use Shakespeare makes of Plautine models does involve a real limitation, for the plot is in effect imposed on the characters from outside, an arbitrary circumstance. As a result, too many of the errors are not meaningful in the way that errors become in the later comedies. We miss, as Professor Bertram Evans has pointed out in his *Shakespeare's Comedies*, people within the play who share in our superior awareness from outside it. The plot does not permit anyone to contrive the errors, tailor them to the particular follies of the victims, and share with the audience the relish of the folly brought out by the "practice"—a method which Mr. Evans has shown to be standard in the later comedies.

But the play is much better, much more meaningful, than the arbitrariness of its plot would lead one to expect. Shakespeare feeds Elizabethan life into the mill of Roman farce, life realized with his distinctively generous creativity, very different from Plautus' tough, narrow, resinous genius. And, although the mill grinds a good deal of chaff as well as wheat, he frequently makes the errors reveal fundamental human nature, especially human nature under the stress and tug of marriage. The tensions of marriage dramatized through Antipholus of Ephesus and his wife he relates to the very different tensions in the romantic tale of Egeon and Emilia with which he frames the Ephesian mix-ups. In the combination he makes of Gower's narrative with Roman dramatic form, we can see Shakespeare's sense of life and art asserting itself through relatively uncongenial materials.

There is more of daily, ordinary life in *The Comedy of Errors* than in any other of the comedies except *The Merry*

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Wives of Windsor. A mere machinery of mistakes is never enough even for the most mechanical comedy; the dramatist must be able to present particular lives being caught up in mistakes and carrying them onward. Something must be going on already—Antipholus of Ephesus late for dinner again, his wife in her usual rage ("Fie, how impatience loureth in your face!"). Shakespeare is marvelous at conveying a sense of a world already there, with its routine tensions:

> The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
> The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell:
> My mistress made it one upon my cheek:
> She is so hot because the meat is cold. . .

He also creates a prosperous commercial town outside the domestic world of the jealous wife's household: its merchant-citizens are going about their individual business, well known to one another and comfortably combining business with pleasure—until the errors catch up with them.

To keep farce going also requires that each person involved be shown making *some* sort of sense out of it, while failing to see through it as the audience can. It would be fatal for one twin to conclude, "Why, I must have been mistaken for my long-lost brother!" So the dramatist must show each of his people taking what happens according to his own bent, explaining to himself as best he can what occurs when, for example, one of the twin masters meets the wrong slave and finds the fellow denying that he ever heard instructions received by the other slave a few moments before. Too often, the master concludes simply that the slave is lazy or impudent, and beats him; this constant thumping of the Dromios grows tedious and is out of key—the one instance where Roman plot has not been adapted to Elizabethan manners.

The idea that the mistakes must be sorcery goes much better. The travelling brothers have heard that Ephesus is full of "Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind." (The town was identified with sorcerers by Saint Paul's reference to their "curious arts" in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, one reason perhaps for Shakespeare's choice of the town as a locale, as Geoffry Bullough has suggested in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare.)* The visitors decide that "This is the fairy land. O spite of spites!/We talk with goblins, owls and sprites." As the errors are wound up tighter and tighter, the wife and sister conclude that husband and slave must be mad, and bring on a real live exorcist, the absurd Dr. Pinch in a huge red wig and beard, to conjure the devil out of them. By the end, Adriana is calling on the whole company to witness that her husband "is born about invisible." We relish the elaboration of these factitious notions of magic to explain events that do indeed seem to "change the mind"; at the same time we enjoy the final return of all hands to the level of fact, where we have been situated all along. The end of the delusions is heralded by Dr. Pinch's being all but burned up by his outraged "patients." The Ephesian husband stubbornly hangs onto his senses and his sense of outrage; he sets fire to the "doctor" as a comic effigy on whom to take vengeance for the notions of madness and magic to which almost everyone has given away:

> O mistress, mistress, shift and save yourself!
> My master and his man are both broke loose,
> Beaten the maids a-row, and bound the doctor,
> Whose beard they have singed off with brands of fire,
> And ever, as it blaz'd, they threw on him
> Great pails of puddled mire to quench the hair:

My master preaches patience to him
and the while
His man with scissors nicks him like
a fool. . .

The most interesting misinterpretations of the mistakes about identity are of course those where error feeds already existing passions—Adriana's jealousy, her husband's irritation—and leads finally to a kind of rhapsody exploding just before the final resolution. Adriana's self-defeating rage at her husband is particularly finely treated, especially in the moment when the travelling brother seems to provide her with the ultimate provocation, by making love to her sister. (Shakespeare added the charming, sensible sister, not in Plautus, as a foil and confidant for the shrewish wife.) After a frenzy of railing, the sister brings the wife up short by asking why she cares about her husband if he is so despicable, and she answers "Ah, but I think him better than I say, . . . My heart prays for him, though my tongue do curse." She is brought up short again, in a final tableau, when the Abbess traps her into betraying how she has made her husband's life miserable. The older woman delivers a splendid, formal rebuke:

Adriana. Still did I tell him it was
vile and bad.
Abbess. And therefore came it that the
man was mad.
The venom clamors of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's
tooth. . . .

Adriana is chastened: "She doth betray me to my own reproof." But her domineering bent is still there: she goes on insisting on her rights to manage her own husband's madness: "I will attend my husband, be his nurse,/ Diet his sickness, for it is my office,/ And will have no attorney but myself; . . ."

We can see a revealing contrast with Plautus in the handling of the Ephesian couple's relations. Shakespeare's husband and wife are more complex; they are also more decent. In *Menaechmi* the husband, at the opening of the play, is making off with a fine cloak of his wife's to give it to Erotium, the courtesan; he has already stolen for her a gold chain of his wife's. Shakespeare's Antipholus only decides to go elsewhere to dine in response to the incomprehensibly outrageous behavior of his wife in locking the doors (while *she* thinks she has at last got him home). It is in revenge for this that he decides to give the young "hostess" the necklace originally ordered for his wife. His eye has strayed, to be sure—"I know a wench of excellent discourse,/ Pretty and witty; wild, and yet, too, gentle; . . . My wife . . . Has oftentimes upbraided me withal." In Plautus there is no ambiguity and no mixture of attitudes: from the outset it is "To hell with my wife, I'm going to have my fun." When in Plautus the visiting twin comes along, he has his unknown brother's good time with Erotium, gets the cloak and chain, and rejoices that it was all free. Shakespeare's twin, by contrast, falls romantically in love with the modest sister Shakespeare has provided, speaking some lovely poetry as he does so.

The difference reflects the difference in the two cultures, Roman and Elizabethan. It also reflects the different form of comedy which Shakespeare was beginning to work out, a comedy appropriate to the fullest potentialities of his culture. Roman comedy functioned as a special field-day for outrageousness; by and large, it fitted Aristotle's formula that comedy deals with characters who are worse than we are. Though there are some conventional, stock heroes and heroines, most of the stage people are meant to be fractions of human nature on its aggressive, libidinal side. The central characters in Shakespeare's comedies, on the other hand, are presented as total, not fractional: whatever their faults, they are conceived as whole people. His comedy dramatizes outrageousness, but usually it is presented as the product of special circumstances, or at least it is

abetted by circumstances. Often the occasion is festivity, or a special situation like a holiday, a moment felt as a saturnalian exception to ordinary life, as I have stressed in writing about *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*. Here the mistakes of identity bring the husband and wife to extremities on a day which is otherwise very much an "every day." Shakespeare however does frame the release of the animal or natural or foolish side of man by presentations of the normal and the ideal. Of course Roman comedy had its recognized place in the whole of life, its accepted fescennine function; but this was something implicit, understood by author, actors and audience. Shakespeare even in this early play makes the *placing* of the comic extremes part of the comedy itself.

The headlong day of errors is begun and ended by the story of Egeon, the bereft father of the twins, condemned to die in the morning, at evening pardoned and reunited with his long-lost wife and sons. It is a story of a very different tonality from the Plautine materials, derived as it is from Gower's Mediaeval handling of a late Greek romance. Shakespeare handled it again in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, where he realizes exquisitely the sense of life's mystery characteristic of the late romances, centering on precarious and sacred family relationships. In *The Comedy of Errors* the old tale is used only to sound a chord of grief at the outset (a somewhat blurred chord), then at the end a much fuller chord of joyful atonement. Yet the story of ocean voyages and long separations, so different from the busy, close-together bustle that comes between its exposition and conclusion, provides a meaningful finale.

That the ending does work, in spite of this difference and the utterly far-fetched coincidences involved, is largely thanks to Shakespeare's control of the rhythm of feeling. In the final farce scenes, feelings break loose, people are beside themselves; extras rush on the stage to bind struggling Antipholus and Dromio; a moment later the two are loose again, as it seems, with swords drawn, driving away all comers. Then suddenly, after this release of passion, the tone changes: the Abbess and the Duke, with aged Egeon, take over the stage, figures of authority and reverence. We hear poignant accents of family feeling in Egeon's:

> Not know my voice! O time's extremity,
> Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
> In seven short years, that here my only son
> Knows not my feeble key of untun'd cares?
> Though now this grained face of mine be hid
> In sap-consuming winter's drizzled snow,
> . . .
> Tell me thou art my son Antipholus.

A moment later the Syracusian Antipholus, who does know his father, comes on stage; the doubles are visible together at last, and the plot is unsprung. But instead of ending there, we are lifted into a curiously serious final moment. The Abbess, now discovered as the wife, speaks of the moment as a new birth of her children:

> Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail
> Of you, my sons, and till this present hour
> My heavy burthen ne'er delivered.

She invites all to "a gossips' feast"—a Christening party, "gossips" here being the old, Prayer-book word for godparents, "god-sibs," brothers and sisters in God of the parents. "After so long grief, such nativity!" the Abbess-wife exclaims. As all go out except the four brothers, the Duke sets his seal on the renewal of community, centered in the family: he uses the word gossip in both its ceremonial sense of "sponsor" and its ordinary, neighborly sense:

> With all my heart, I'll gossip at this feast.

One final goodhumored Error amongst masters and slaves, and the play ends gayly with the Dromios' joke about repeating *their* birth:

> We came into this world like brother and brother;
> And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.

Shakespeare's sense of comedy as a moment in a larger cycle leads him to go out of his way, even in this early play, to frame farce with action which presents the weight of age and the threat of death, and to make the comic resolution a renewal of life, indeed explicitly a rebirth. One must admit, however, that he does rather go out of his way to do it: Egeon and Emilia are off-stage and almost entirely out of mind in all but the first and last scenes. We can notice, however, that the bonds of marriage, broken in their case by romantic accident, are also very much at issue in the intervening scenes, where marriage is subjected to the very unromantic strains of temperament grinding on temperament in the setting of daily life. Moreover, Adriana and her Antipholus are both *in* their marriage (as wooing couples are in love); its hold on them comes out under the special stress of the presence of the twin doubles. The seriousness of the marriage, however trying, appears in Adriana's long speech rebuking and pleading with her husband when he seems at last to have come home to dinner (it is, of course, the wrong brother):

> Ah, do not tear thyself away from me;
> For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled thence that drop again, . . .
> As take from me thyself and not me too.
> How dearly would it touch thee to the quick,
> Shouldst thou but hear I were licentious. . .

That for her husband home and wife are really primary is made explicit even when he is most angry:

> Since mine own doors refuse to entertain me,
> I'll knock elsewhere, to see if they'll disdain me.

Shakespeare nowhere else deals with the daily substance of marriage, its irritations and its strong holding power *(The Merry Wives of Windsor* touches some of this, at a later stage of married life; the rest of the comedies are wooing and wedding). There *is* a deep logic, therefore, to merging, in the ending, the fulfillment of a long-stretched, romantic longing of husband and wife with the conclusion, in the household of Antipholus, of domestic peace after domestic frenzy. No doubt their peace is temporary, but for the moment all vexation is spent; and Adriana *may* have learned something from the Abbess' lecture, even though the Abbess turns out to be her mother-in-law!

Romeo and Juliet:

Reversals, Contraries, Transformations, and Ambivalence

STEPHEN A. SHAPIRO

ACT II, SCENE VI, and Act III, scene i, constitute the geographical center of *Romeo and Juliet*. The former scene ends with Friar Laurence hurrying to "incorporate two in one," to marry Romeo and Juliet. The latter scene embraces Romeo's slaying of Tybalt, an act which divides the lovers just as they are becoming united. Both scenes embody ironic or dramatic reversals. By concentrating on the reversals in these two scenes, I believe that much can be learned about both the structure and the meaning of the entire play.

By the end of Act II Friar Laurence, despite his counsel of moderation, is forced to "make short work" of the marriage of Romeo and Juliet. Thus, despite his knowledge that "they stumble that run fast" (II.iii.94),[1] the Friar begins to run, becomes involved in the relentless acceleration of events, acts contrary to the way in which he would choose to act. He exits with Romeo and Juliet, who are ecstatic over "this dear encounter." The Friar's final words, "two in one," are left hanging in the air at the end of the scene. The next scene contradicts these words by ending with Romeo's banishment. But the words will have complex reverberations. For though Romeo and Juliet are divided, they become reunited, and their deaths incorporate two feuding families into one peaceful commonwealth.

Act III opens with Mercutio upbraiding the peaceful Benvolio for being a hot man to quarrel. The contrary of this situation is immediately asserted when Tybalt enters. Mercutio responds to Tybalt's "a word with one of you," with "make it a word and a blow." Then Romeo enters, encountering Tybalt's hate with its contrary, love. But shortly thereafter, Romeo's love is transformed into its opposite by Tybalt's murder of Mercutio—a deathblow delivered under Romeo's peacemaking arm. It is important to note that Mercutio dies because he willingly involves himself in the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. However, after he is stabbed by Tybalt, he three times cries, "A plague o' both your houses!" And his dying gasp is "—your houses!"

It is not accidental that Mercutio's outcries come at the exact center of the play. "A plague o' both your houses!" is both a judgment and a prophecy, as well as a curse. Through the repetition of this line Mercutio rises almost physically above the action of the play. And as this line sounds and resounds, one begins to realize that the whole play pivots on it. For up to Mercutio's death *Romeo and Juliet* is a romantic comedy. After it, it becomes a tragedy. The comic brawl that opened the play has been transformed by death. And as Romeo realizes, "This day's black fate on more days doth depend;/This but begins the woe others must end" (III.i.118-119).

A moment later, Romeo kills Tybalt, and is exiled. The Romeo that begged

[1] *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Tragedies of Shakespeare* (London, Oxford University Press, 1924). All future references will be to this text.

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Tybalt and Mercutio to "forbear this outrage" has committed that outrage. Like Friar Laurence, who counsels slowness, like Mercutio, who counselled peace, Romeo has advised one thing and enacted its opposite. The pressure of events forces all three men to reverse themselves. But do these contraries function within the pattern of a larger series of reversals and transformations? The "Prologue" indicates that they do.

> From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
> A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
> Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
> Do with their death bury their parents' strife.

The play seems to be governed by the sacrificial deaths of Romeo and Juliet which reverse their parents' hate.

On another level, the language of the play deals in contraries, as Romeo's "Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" speech (I.i.181) attests. Juliet also explores contraries, calling Romeo:

> Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
> Dove-feather'd raven! wolfish-ravening lamb!
> Despised substance of divinest show!
> Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st;
> A damned saint, an honourable villain!
> (III.ii.75-79)

Caroline Spurgeon has documented the fact that "each of the lovers thinks of the other as light,"[2] that Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* conceives of love as the light in a dark world. And W. H. Clemen has commented on contrasting patterns of imagery in *Romeo and Juliet*.[3] But, though many critics have remarked about the various contraries and contrasts to be found in *Romeo and Juliet*, no one has as yet attempted to explore their function in terms of the total meaning of the play.

It is my contention that the play "means" primarily through its contraries and contradictions. One is virtually forced to this conclusion, for either/or interpretations tend to be unsatisfactory because they ignore large sections of the play. H. L. Mencken was perhaps the first to suggest that *Romeo and Juliet* is a grotesque parody of romantic love. It is undeniable that elements of parody are to be found in the play—such as the exaggerated "O, O, O" grief patterns in Act IV, scene v, and perhaps even Juliet's melodramatic soliloquy on her forthcoming immolation. But one cannot ignore the fact that, as is witnessed by all of Shakespeare's comedies, Shakespeare did not believe that romantic love was absurd, but rather that it could have a kind of religious value. At the same time, however, one cannot go to the other extreme and simply affirm that Romeo and Juliet are heroic figures. For the elements of parody cannot be ignored. Romeo and Juliet are immature, even absurd in their immaturity—as witness Romeo "There on the ground . . . Blubbering and weeping, weeping and blubbering" (III.iii.82, 86). When Friar Laurence criticizes Romeo: "Art thou a man? . . . Thy tears are womanish . . . (III.iii.108-109), one can only agree with him. And there is something about the love of these two adolescents that is even more ambiguous than their immaturity.

The "Prologue" tells us that the love of Romeo and Juliet is "death-mark'd"—presumably because of the enmity of their parents and the disposition of the stars. But, though fortune plays a key role in this drama, Shakespeare also conceives of fate in terms of character. One of the first things we learn about Romeo is that he

> Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,

[2] "The Imagery of *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean (New York, 1961), p. 73.

[3] *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (New York, 1951), p. 68.

> And makes himself an artificial night.
> Black and portentous must this humour prove . . .
>
> (I.i.140-142)

Even before he meets Juliet, Romeo seeks darkness. And his misgiving that his "despised life" will end in "untimely death" (I.iv.111, 112) is certainly more immediately connected to his character, his desire to die, than to any medieval tradition. Shakespeare has anticipated one of the most paradoxical and profound insights of psychoanalysis: a man is as much responsible for what is done to him as for what he does. Fortune, what happens to one, and fate, what one is, fuse.

Is it not strange that when Romeo first arrived in Mantua, before he heard of Juliet's death, he thought of deadly poisons (V.i.50-53)? Is it not disturbing that Juliet, after hearing of Romeo's banishment, resolves:

> I'll to the friar, to know his remedy:
> If all else fail, myself have power to die,
>
> (III.v.241-242)

instead of resolving to find Romeo and live? One begins to suspect that when Juliet threatens the friar: "I long to die,/If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy" (IV.i.66-67), she longs more for death than for remedy.

However, one cannot quite conclude that when Romeo kills Tybalt, honorably revenging Mercutio's death, and cries "O! I am Fortune's fool" (III.i.135), he is merely rationalizing. Nothing is simple in Shakespeare. If fortune fuses with fate on the one hand, it fuses with Providence on the other. Romeo *is* "Fortune's fool." But in *Romeo and Juliet*, fortune is not fickle but purposeful. As Willard Farnham has indicated, fortune is ultimately referable to God's will, according to the medieval reconciliation of seemingly contrary authorities.[4] And in *Romeo and Juliet* fortune operates not only to destroy Romeo and Juliet but also to reconcile the Montagues and Capulets. Thus Friar Laurence's lines:

> The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;
> What is her burying grave that is her womb . . .
>
> (II.iii.9-10)

with their sense of harmonized contraries, may provide a "key" to the meaning of the play. They certainly symbolize the action of the play. The parents of the lovers are in a sense their tomb. But out of the tomb of the lovers, reconciliation, if not new life, is born. The "plague" that Mercutio wishes on the two houses becomes actualized as the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, but becomes partially transformed into a kind of blessing. However, the disproportion between what has been gained and what lost may indicate that there is irony in the reconciliation scene.

This ambiguous and perhaps unsatisfying scene returns us to the ambiguous nature of the love shared or indulged in by the protagonists. By suggesting that Romeo and Juliet desire to die, I am not necessarily concluding that this makes them simply an object of satire. The desire for perfect love, or perfect anything else, is fundamentally an unrealizable one—in life as we know it. But the desire for an endless and perfect night of love seems to be a constituent of the human personality, compounded of the will to die and the will to return to the womb. The fact that Romeo and Juliet, like Tristan and Isolde, hate the day and cherish the night is profoundly symbolic. A love like their love cannot live in the daylight world of prose. Thus their love has both a positive and a negative pole, and our response to it must be an ambivalent one. Romeo and Juliet have achieved something beyond the ability of Mercutio or the Nurse or the Friar or the parents to conceive. They have achieved perfect communion,

[4] *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Oxford, 1956), p. 104.

total absorption of self in the other. We cannot help responding to this rare consummation. But its price is death, the extinction of the individual personality.

Tragedies of the greatest magnitude are rituals of self-destruction. The protagonists are sacrificed to "save" the audience. That is the meaning of catharsis. One is purged through tragedy of the desire to destroy oneself by an excess of desire, by monomania, by the unleashed forces of the id. In *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare offers us the opportunity both to participate in the love of Romeo and Juliet, to sympathize with it, to vicariously gratify our own desire for it, and simultaneously to react against it.

The function of the contraries and reversals in *Romeo and Juliet* is to sustain what Simon O. Lesser terms "*a sense of the opposite.*"[5] The play possesses what Lesser calls "the sublime ambivalence of great narrative art."[6] We are constantly aware of the double face of the action. When old Capulet laments:

> All things that we ordained festival,
> Turn from their office to black funeral;
> Our instruments to melancholy bells,
> Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast,
> Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change,
> Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,
> And all things change them to the contrary,
>
> (IV.v.84-90)

he is saying more than he knows. For not only has he changed *his* complexion, not only is he grieving for a live daughter, not only is it his doing that has made a funeral of a festival, but the entire play is an expression of things changing to their contraries. Hasting lovers are transformed into statues; feuding fathers become friends; a moderation-counselling friar becomes the most extreme stumbler of all; fickle fortune becomes purposeful; life-giving, light-giving love radiates darkness and death; the deaths of the lovers produce a kind of birth by ending civil strife. In Friar Laurence's terms:

> The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;
> What is her burying grave that is her womb . . .
>
> (II.iii.9-10)

Romeo and Juliet, in its contraries, reversals, and transformations, furnishes us with a dynamic image of the impulsive-inhibited ambivalence of the human psyche itself. Every human action is the mate, the father, the child of its contrary.

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[5] *Fiction and the Unconscious* (Boston, 1957), p. 87.

[6] Ibid., p. 120.

Teaching *Hamlet*

ROBERT ORNSTEIN

WHAT IS THERE LEFT TO SAY about *Hamlet?* The millions of words already written make cowards of us all when we try to discuss the play. For we wonder not only about the adequacy of our interpretations but also about the feasibility of presenting to youthful students a masterpiece that has baffled and bemused generations of scholars. A vast bibliography suggests that a lifetime spent on *Hamlet* would hardly suffice; but to some of our students a few class hours on the play may seem a lifetime.

Unless we are awed by *Hamlet* we probably cannot teach it well; but if we are too intimidated by its supposed problems, we will feel compelled to offer our students a relatively simple key or guide to the character of Hamlet and to the play. And any simple key to the "mystery" of *Hamlet* is bound to be an oversimplification of the play as a work of tragic art. One of the greatest mysteries of *Hamlet* is its ability to elicit completely contradictory responses. Even while we profess great reverence for its inexhaustible meanings, we would like to bound it in a nutshell, to pluck out the heart of its mystery by exhibiting to the world that single flaw, obsession, weakness, identifiable malady, or nobility which explains the Prince of Denmark. Even Olivier, we recall, prefaced his film with the portentous suggestion that *Hamlet* is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind, and then called attention to Shakespeare's notion of *hamartia*—the speech on the "dram of e'il."

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While Olivier's capsule definition of Hamlet's problem does little good, it also does little harm, because it is forgotten as soon as the action of the film begins. It is another matter when we offer capsule definitions in the classroom, because they do not merely preface the reading of the play—they necessarily control and condition it. The play is not presented to the students but is rather schematized and explained for them. Moreover the play seems to exist for the sake of its "mystery"; and the "mystery" seems to exist in order to mystify. One hates to think of the many students who are given the shortest and simplest way through *Hamlet* as if they were rats being trained to thread a laboratory maze. Worse still is the thought that the maze would not exist if critics and teachers did not create it. I would suggest that if we ignored the problem of *Hamlet*, it might just go away, because students reading the play for the first time are not likely to be oppressed by Hamlet's inactivity when in almost every scene he is actively engaged in a duel with Claudius or his dupes. In a theater the problems which vex the critics of *Hamlet* seem even more artificial, because an audience is far too engrossed in what happens on stage to speculate about what does not happen, even though Hamlet at several points accuses himself of tardiness or inaction.

Of course, the very process of teaching literature involves the pointing out of questions which untrained readers do not perceive. But it is one thing to point out that almost every line of *Hamlet* poses a question in that it needs to be interpreted. It is another thing to insist that the main cruxes in *Hamlet*,

though implicit in the dialogue and dramatic action, are concerned with facets of Hamlet's psyche or personality which the plot merely hints at. Although *Hamlet* is not an easy play, neither is it difficult to interpret or to follow scene by scene in the way that *Troilus and Cressida* is, and it does not require the sophisticated poetic responsiveness that *Antony and Cleopatra* does. We might well agree with Dr. Johnson that the primary characteristic of *Hamlet* is not a complexity that tantalizes the intellect but a variety and richness of imagined life—a multiplicity of character, theme, incident, tone, and mood which makes it the most fascinating of all dramatic actions.

Our task would be easier if we were less afraid of being superficial about *Hamlet:* if we did not feel slightly superior to its plot and imagine that Shakespeare felt the same way. We yearn for philosophical heights and psychological depths—we want to ponder those aspects of the play which seem to us to rise above its melodramatic tale of violence and revenge. How easy it is, in fact, to entertain a class by reciting the bare framework of plot in *Hamlet*, which gives no sense of the beauty or profundity of Shakespeare's art. But if the plot of *Hamlet* without the Prince or the poetry is an amusing oversimplification, so too is the Prince or the poetry of *Hamlet* without the plot—or rather it would be amusing if it were not so frequent a fact of modern criticism, which is intent on analyzing patterns of imagery or verbal and thematic structure.

The assumption that the greatness of *Hamlet* exists apart from, or even in spite of, its plot is the first step on the road to sophisticated error. For if this assumption is correct, then *Hamlet* is not a masterpiece of tragic art; it is instead a brilliant tour de force which somehow accomplishes the impossible task of wedding a supremely civilized tragic idea to a brutal story. And once we think it is legitimate to distinguish the primitive and sophisticated levels of meaning or motive in *Hamlet*, we begin to sympathize with a Shakespeare who had this really marvelous tragic idea—the Renaissance Prince, "What a piece of work is a man," and all that—but in order to please his audience fleshed it out in conventionally melodramatic form. Now we cannot ignore the tragic contrast between the nobility of Hamlet's thoughts and the savagery of some of his actions. But we must decide whether, in this regard, it is Shakespeare's play or Hamlet's time that is out of joint—whether Shakespeare achieved a great tragedy in spite of his plot or, like the Athenian dramatists handling their ghastly legends, worked easily in his tragic fable by continually molding it to the highest artistic purposes.

My point is that *Hamlet* is not a savage tale uplifted by a noble hero or redeemed by a somewhat incongruent philosophical idealism. Its incidents of plot are not only more credible than the incidents of plot in other Elizabethan revenge tragedies, but, more important, they create a totally different impression of the world of human action. The universe of *Hamlet* is not the nightmare world of Kyd or Webster where the vicious and the insane seem the norm of existence. For all its violence and use of the supernatural, *Hamlet* is the Shakespearean play which comes closest to mirroring the random casual form of daily experience which turns on unexpected meetings, conversations, and such accidents as the arrival of the players. And if we do nothing else in class but convey as accurately as we can the immediate sense of life which *Hamlet* offers, we will perform a valuable service because so much of recent criticism falsifies it.

To convey the tragic sense of life in *Hamlet*, however, we must be willing to teach the play carefully and patiently scene by scene—and that's hard. For how pleasurable it is to bestride the dramatic

action like a Colossus (or like a modern critic), pointing out recurring themes and motifs, fascinating parallels and contrasts of character and action. Moreover when we compare the leisurely unfolding of the plot, which continually wanders into such apparent detours as the speech to the players, with the superbly organized verbal patterns disclosed by recent criticism, we almost conclude that Shakespeare's artistic energies were more engaged in constructing an intellectual drama of language and theme than in constructing the dramatic action which unfolds upon the stage.

Modern criticism can be justly proud of its discovery of the thematic patterns of death, disease, ulcer, poison, painting, acting, and seeming in *Hamlet;* but it has yet to assess the extent to which it artificially amplifies reverberations of language by uprooting them from the dialogue. Too often the supposed drama of image and theme in *Hamlet* loses contact with the more immediate drama of character in action. We smile at romantic nineteenth-century versions of *Hamlet;* and yet there is nothing in nineteenth-century criticism quite so Gothic as G. Wilson Knight's spectral, death-ridden Hamlet, who seems to materialize from the misty forests of an Ingmar Bergman film. There is a touch of intellectual melodrama in many thematic interpretations of *Hamlet*, because the attempt to establish its universe by tracing recurrent patterns of language or action leads easily to the conclusion that in *Hamlet* life is seen as a dark and deadly conspiracy against virtue: to the left a poisoned cup, to the right a poisoned rapier; behind the arras the lurking spies; all about the rottenness of the court. (An accurate epitome of the dramatic scenes of Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, such a montage falsifies Shakespeare's play.) Because modern criticism often treats Shakespearean dialogue as if it were a direct channel of communication between dramatist and audience, we must remember in class that the primary function of dialogue is to create the individual worlds of the characters' thoughts—worlds that may be eccentric or clouded over with melancholy. We must remember also that while a playwright may use thematic imagery to universalize his necessarily confined dramatic action, he creates his dramatic world primarily through character and scene, not through patterns of language.

The modern concern with the world of *Hamlet* is salutory, because much of the drama springs from Hamlet's bitter reaction against the world in which he finds himself. If we do not pay sufficient attention to the various characters who make up Hamlet's world, we cannot grasp the drama of his struggle to come to terms with it and to decide upon the alternatives of action and resignation. If we see the court of Denmark as merely corrupt or decadent, if we view the marriage of Claudius and Gertrude as wholly vile and disgusting, what shall we think of a Hamlet who, at last, not only accepts the evil of his world but apparently makes his separate peace with it—who is no longer horrified by his mother and no longer driven by the need to cleanse the filthy sty of the throne?

It is one thing to say that there *is* something rotten in Denmark. It is another thing to turn poetic suggestion into literal dramatic reality by picturing the Danish court as a nest of corruption offset only by Hamlet and Horatio, the two Wittenberg scholars. Shall we read *Hamlet* as a tribute to the moral benefits of a higher education by a man who never went beyond grammar school? Shall we add to every line of the minor characters a foppish tinge and a knowing leer so that all the courtiers are like Osric and Osric is worse than his lines could possibly suggest? Remember that the action begins not quite two months after the death of Hamlet's father, a Hyperion among rulers, and that the first court scene makes evident that the men

surrounding Claudius served the former ruler and elected Claudius as their new king. If the court is decadent, then Shakespeare asks us to accept a fantastic donné: namely, that Claudius' secret crime has literally, and not merely symbolically, poisoned the wellbeing of Denmark. Not even the mythic Greeks deal in such fantasies. The plague that descends on Thebes during the reign of Oedipus is an act of the Gods, not a symbolic consequence of the unsolved murder of Laius. Moreover, to look back to the reign of Hamlet's father is not to step outside the artistic reality of Shakespeare's play, for Shakespeare in various ways emphasizes how brief a time it is since the death of Hamlet's father; and he makes the past and the memory of the past a vital part of the present scene.

Sometimes Shakespeare asks us to accept the traditional donnés of folk and romantic imagination: he asks us to "believe" in ghosts and fairy kings. But he never asks us to accept an implausible situation for purposes of plot. We do not enjoy *Othello* in spite of our common sense, which says that a young, protected Venetian heiress would not elope with a much older stranger of a different race, culture, and color. We accept the elopement of Desdemona and Othello because their love seems to us completely natural and plausible. The idea that their love is unnatural is a donné that exists only in Iago's obscene imagination, even as the idea that the world is vile and corrupt exists only in the melancholy imagination of the early Hamlet.

If like Francis Fergusson we wish to make *Hamlet* an analogue of *King Oedipus* then we must see Denmark as infected by a mortal sickness which only a ritual sacrifice will cure. But the price of squaring the world of Denmark with Hamlet's melancholy imagination is a heavy one. It involves not only an unwarranted stress on the cynicism or deviousness of the court but almost inevitably an attempt to discover beneath the surface of Shakespeare's action a submerged drama of evil that supports our hypothesis of corruption. We cannot accept the comedy of the Osric scene as a prelude that heightens the poignancy of Hamlet's death. No, we must ask if Osric is really as fatuous as he seems or whether there is not something dark beneath his simpering appearance because he brings in the foils. This kind of speculation about Osric is worse than irrelevant: it substitutes for the great simplicity of effect which, I think, Shakespeare intends something at once more complex and more pedestrian. In place of Shakespeare's superbly varied plot, in which light alternates with darkness, laughter with grief and pain, it offers a dramatic action more consistently and conventionally sinister, in which appearance always masks a vicious reality.

Our students should realize that there is a difference between the unknown and the ambiguous in literature as in life. The former is not always the latter, for though ambiguity depends upon some final doubt about a character's nature or motives, that doubt is created by our *knowledge* of the seeming contradictions in a character, not by our ignorance of his possible relationships with other characters in the play. Osric is not ambiguous because we do not know what he might have known of Claudius' plot, any more than Gertrude is ambiguous because we do not know whether she was unfaithful to her husband before or after his death. Regardless of her past, Gertrude is not a question mark, for we know all too well her complacency, shallowness, obtuseness, and kindliness. It is also worth noting that when a character like Laertes is party to Claudius' treachery, the information is not withheld from us.

A primary tenet of critical faith is that a dramatist, in one way or another,

gives us all the information necessary to understand his work. And yet for a century and a half criticism has been engaged in speculating on what Shakespeare supposedly withholds from us—the cause of Hamlet's inability to take revenge. We do not hear so much today about the delay of revenge because we are no longer certain that *delay* is the right word or the actual impression of Hamlet's behavior. But to an extraordinary extent modern views of *Hamlet* are still shaped by nineteenth-century assumptions. Sometimes modern criticism suggests that what happens in *Hamlet* is not crucially important, because the greatness of the play lies in its presentation of an eternal, insoluble human predicament or dilemma. Sometimes it suggests that nothing can happen in *Hamlet* because the hero is paralyzed, not by a Coleridgean intellect, but by neurotic obsessions with evil and death, or by his Oedipal fixation.

Necessarily, all interpretations of *Hamlet* are speculative; all are hypothetical ways of seeing the play and of relating its various parts. But critical speculation and hypothesis should be continually informed and corrected by the lines and scenes of the play, not in control of our response to them. We should be particularly wary when speculation builds upon speculation, as in Ernest Jones's *Hamlet and Oedipus*, which ingeniously stretches the play between the romantic hypothesis of Hamlet's inability to act and the Freudian hypothesis of Shakespeare's unconscious realization of the Oedipal complex. Once the assumption of Hamlet's paralysis of will takes hold, we easily turn scene after scene into an indictment of his failure to act. The ability of Laertes to burst in on Claudius at the head of a mob becomes proof of what Hamlet could have done had he been more a man of action. But the rash, shallow, easily corrupted Laertes is hardly a standard by which to measure Hamlet's failings. It would seem just as reasonable to argue that here Shakespeare's point is that had Laertes been more like Hamlet he would not have been so easily duped by Claudius. Most unfortunate of all is the critical hypothesis that Shakespeare was more interested in hypothetical ideals and abstractions than in living personalities, because it leads to attempts to synthesize an ideal courtier, man of action, or revenger out of bits and pieces of Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras.

Instead of seeing Shakespeare's genius as dedicated to the negative end of postponing the act of vengeance in *Hamlet*, we should rather focus on what does happen in the play—the absorbing drama of the struggle between Hamlet and Claudius. And we need to emphasize in class how uneven the struggle is between a Hamlet armed only with the doubtful message of the Ghost and a shrewd, suspicious, ruthless Claudius, armed with the power and authority of the throne, and surrounded by a court which sees only the surface irrationality and recklessness of Hamlet's actions. Even against a less able opponent than Claudius, who so cleverly thrusts many others between him and his nephew, Hamlet's task would be difficult, because he must forfeit his only advantage—that of surprise—in order to be certain of Claudius' guilt.

The secret duel between Hamlet and Claudius which breaks to the surface at last in the deadly fencing match is similar to the plot line of many Elizabethan revenge tragedies. But the bitterness of the struggle in *Hamlet* is not, as in other Elizabethan plays, the consequence of savage or sadistic personalities. Most of the brutal acts that take place in *Hamlet* are unpremeditated or unintended. We are touched not only by the death of an innocent Ophelia, crushed by a conflict of which she knows nothing, but also by the constant yearning for love and affection which is expressed even in the midst of mortal enmity. We recall Hamlet's cherishing of Horatio, his

delighted greeting to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his moments of tenderness for Ophelia, his hunger for Laertes' pardon and love, and his response to his mother's affection in the fencing match. And equally moving is the desire for Hamlet's affection expressed not only by Ophelia but also by Gertrude, by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, by the dying Laertes, and even by Claudius himself. We hear much of Hamlet the reluctant revenger, but what of Laertes, who almost draws back from his vicious plot, and of Claudius, who hesitates to act lest he pain his beloved Gertrude?

Less savage in his acts than Macbeth, Claudius is more contemptible in that his emotions are more shallow and commonplace. He has committed a crime viler than the murder of Duncan, but he has no need to wade on in blood because he can live with the memory of murder; he can enjoy the throne he seems ably to possess and the Queen whom he loves. He can even hope to befriend Hamlet, whom he adopts as his heir. When threatened by a past that will die only when Hamlet is destroyed, Claudius is once again ruthless in his passion for safety. Yet he plots Hamlet's murder only after Hamlet, in murdering Polonius, has revealed his own readiness to kill.

Despite his hatred of Claudius, it is not until the last moment of the play that a dying Hamlet carries out his revenge. We can hardly say that Hamlet is too noble, too weak, or too intellectual to carry out a bloody deed when the play reveals him capable of killing without compunction when his life is threatened. But though he speaks to the Ghost of sweeping to his revenge, soon after he speaks of the cursed spite of his task; and only at the end of the play when he is no longer driven by thoughts of vengeance, does he seem at peace with himself and with the world. If Shakespeare gave us a hero who, without inner struggle, deliberately accomplishes his revenge, then we might say that in *Hamlet* characterization, philosophical theme, and tragic action do not totally cohere. But Shakespeare did not have to compromise his idealizing hero to make him play the primitive role of revenger, because Hamlet, though savage when provoked, is still in moral outlook superior to the code of vengeance that enables Claudius to corrupt Laertes. To put it differently, Shakespeare is concerned with a human impulse more fundamental and universal than Renaissance codes of vengeance. In Hamlet, Claudius, Laertes, and Fortinbras as well, he portrays that need to shed blood, that hunger for destruction—even for the imminent death of 20,000 men—that springs from wounded honor or vanity, lust or ambition, or from unbearable memory and sense of loss.

Even as the thought of killing Hamlet warms the sickness in Laertes' heart, so earlier the thought of killing Claudius gives the brooding Hamlet a reason to live, a dedication, an outlet for the bitterness and disgust in which he is drowning. And there are times when Hamlet is overwhelmed by the emotional need to kill. Having spared the kneeling Claudius, he must release the pentup fury in his mother's closet; he must lash out even if the victim be only the foolish Polonius. At the beginning of the play Hamlet needs to pursue a Claudius who would put aside his murderous past. More ironic still, at the end, when Hamlet no longer needs to shed blood to be at peace with himself, when Laertes is beginning to draw back, the fearful Claudius brings destruction on them all.

Because of its secrecy, the struggle between Hamlet and Claudius is drenched in irony. Masquerading under the innocent forms of daily life, it takes place in seemingly casual encounters or recreations; it is shaped by such accidents as the arrival of the players or a cup wrongly taken up. But dwarfing these immediate ironies is the vaster

irony, which Hamlet alone perceives, of the pettiness and blindness of human calculation and intent in a world where destiny is molded by forces beyond man's control or comprehension. And with Hamlet we wonder if any struggle of man against man matters when placed against the vast stream of time that flows endlessly towards oblivion.

As Hamlet finally realizes, the great questions of love, of belief, and of acceptance are not to be settled by a sword stroke. Except for the finality of the grave, all else—his father's life and his mother's love—is as ephemeral as memory itself. But though forgetfulness is dwelt upon in *Hamlet*, as in *Troilus and Cressida*, as the very essence of human frailty, it is also seen as natural, inevitable, and healing, because only the fading of tormenting memory can release the present from the burden of the past. The Ghost begs Hamlet, "Remember me"; but as Hamlet walks through the graveyard meditating on death, he does not think of his father. He has not forgotten, but neither is the memory of his father's death a sickness in the heart that only another death—his or Claudius'—will cure.

In *Hamlet* few plans or strategems are realized as purposed; most often the contrivers are hoisted with their own petards. The bitterest ironies, of course, dog the steps of Hamlet, who would be scrupulous in his revenge, yet lashes out in a blind fury at Polonius, shatters Ophelia's sanity, and falls in the ghastly sweepstake slaughter of the last scene. But the ironies of *Hamlet* do not always mock human intentions; sometimes they mock our critical folly. If we continue to brood over the physical act of vengeance which does not occur as planned, we will continue to speculate about Hamlet's inability to act. But if we attend to what does happen in the play, we realize that the great question is not whether Hamlet can cut a throat with malice aforethought, but whether he can take the course of action that is *nobler in the mind*. Ultimately thought and action are one in *Hamlet* because Hamlet's crucial act is a spiritual choice—of life (to be) and of the readiness that is "all."

We might profit, then, in our teaching from Hamlet's experience. Instead of insisting on the need to pluck out the heart of every mystery, we might more willingly surrender to the beauty and power of a dramatic action which defies our attempts at logical analysis. Indeed, like Hamlet, we might conclude that our task is not to analyze or dissect but to comprehend—to gain that sense of the whole of the dramatic action, and of the meaning of the whole, which makes so many of the speculations and hypotheses of the past seem irrelevant.

Lear and the Lost Self

WARREN TAYLOR

ENGLISH PLAYS, Shakespeare's in particular, have tended to stand on their own, explicit and self-sufficient. The dramatist as artist has had to be exoteric. What happens and his sense of what happens he has had to make immediately apparent in the play itself. Actions move on quickly; there is no time to pause and ponder. The Greek audiences in antiquity knew the events they were to see dramatized and might readily be able to place action in a larger cultural context. Since English drama, however, has not generally been structured from shared circumstances and English audiences before the play have known nothing of what was to happen in it, the dramatist could not build on the esoteric. Erudition, cultural syntheses, theologies, and philosophies hindered rather than helped him. He wished to be not tutor but dramatist. As dramatist, he had to make persons, actions, and meanings self-evident and self-sufficient for the immediate grasp of audiences who were not dependably tutored in special, tendentious views.

The criterion of overt explicitness in drama makes too much explication of meaning extraneous. It brings sharply into question the validity of frequent efforts to superimpose on Shakespeare's dramatic vision of particular persons on particular occasions a wide range of secondary visions, cultural, theological, metaphysical. The criterion requires that the play stand alone. The superimposition of the esoteric is centrifugal; it can but blur the dramatic vision.

Meaning in a play by Shakespeare, even a profound one, centers not in special views which reflect special interests, but in experiences common to all men. Meaning, consequently, is apparent at once in its own terms to audiences who need no extra coaching or erudite instruction. There is really no inherently necessary occasion to try to circumvent a simple, universal directness in, for example, *King Lear.*

In the end, this play is not about Renaissance humanism, as a movement, nor ecclesiastically established Christian doctrines of man and nature, nor metaphysically postulated theories about a universe. Shakespeare was not scholar, theologian, nor philosopher. He was a dramatist. And by and large, his audiences were not scholars, theologians, nor philosophers. His level of dramatic discourse, consequently, was simple and direct, directed not to erudite but to immediate comprehension. *King Lear* is not about doctrines. It is about many persons, but primarily about Lear himself.

Shakespeare begins with the certainty of surfaces and appearances in Lear. No doubt about it; Lear does not presume too much. Lear is a man. Lear is a father. Lear is a king. To Lear, his image of himself is that of a king and father who is wise and just and his image of a family is that of children, who because they are children, cater to his personal pleasures. The division of his kingdom and the disinheritance of a daughter who will not flatter him are beyond reproach. Lear is himself blind to the possibility of conflicting judgments. But not Shakespeare. To him, Lear's presumption of rightness and even perfection in his own sense of himself, the kingship, the kingdom, and

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his family is at once disastrously wrong, no matter the power he momentarily holds. Shakespeare lets Kent speak the counter judgment: "Mad old man, check your hideous rashness; hold your kingdom; never let power bow to flattery nor majesty fall to folly." And Lear, thereupon, compounds error by banishing Kent. Who is man, that the dramatist is mindful of him? Shakespeare's way of asking this question in *Lear* discloses as comprehensive a dichotomy in personal identity, not in self-defeating isolation, but in extension into family and kingdom, as one may find in any literature. King is not king; father is not father; man is not man. King, father, and man, Lear had been and not been; he came finally to have glimpses of what he had not been. What, with better foresight, he might have been, but had never been, is the self he lost.

In the first two acts of the play, Shakespeare opens an unbridgeable chasm between Lear's presumptions about himself and the surrounding actualities which those very presumptions have always kept him from understanding. All that he did, as father and king, he presumed was exemplary. Bridie's calling him "an arrogant old fool" is but a blunt way of noting that he had almost endlessly neglected his education in the substance of human ideals. Although just such an education begins in the last three acts, Lear's tragedy is that his understanding of human ideals, though emerging, is still too late to flower in his own life and in the lives of his children and his countrymen.

The first two acts glow with a furious white heat between the arcs of presumption and actuality. Lear presumes that, by their very natures, fathers love children and children reverence their fathers. Parental benefaction and filial gratitude are the natural fruits of family harmony; there is an inviolable order in propinquity and property of blood. Children are always truthful; what they say always matches what they feel in their hearts. And property is the most fitting reward for declaration of affection.

The king has property, shadowy forests, champains rich'd, plenteous rivers, and wide-skirted meads. The king also has prestige and power. And Lear, by possessing property and sovereignty, presumes that he also possesses knowledge, reason, and wisdom. The present division of his kingdom will prevent future strife. The king, without cares, will still be king; his authority will hold in his countenance; ceremonious affection for him will be forthcoming from all throughout his life.

With the opening of the third act, Shakespeare reaches the reckoning: Lear's last impressions of the human condition, the insights that more than eighty years of life now permit to loom in his awareness as parts of its meaning and its worth. All had not been well; nor is all well. Having dramatized Lear adrift on heights of presumption and self-deception, Shakespeare now permits him to descend into its hard actualities and pull between contrarieties. That descent, however, is only partly in substance. In substance, the king is unfrocked, unmanned, without palace, without power, an old man in a storm, as close as man need come to being naked and alone in nature. What his own family and Gloucester's family are doing, and what the state of the realm he himself has divided now is he does not know. His insights, consequently, are in the shadows of derangement, not in the luminosity of poetic or rational detachment. Here Shakespeare achieves a consummate dramatic irony; the glimpses of wisdom in a king who had never been really wise come not as informed and sustained understanding. They come, discretely and feverishly, in pain and frenzy.

> O! matter and impertinency mix'd
> Reason in madness.

Man is not man at all. Man is an animal. Unaccommodated, without the trappings

of civilization, he is but a poor, bare forked animal. Man is not a rational animal; animal man lives by instinct, by lust. Gloucester's Edmund is a bastard; and, at the outset, Gloucester can only say: "there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged." The double conspiracy of the bastard against father and brother flourishes. And the goatish disposition sees Edmund through. Goneril's lust for him prompts her to ask that he kill her husband, to poison to death her widowed sister Regan, also enamored, and, her intent discovered, to kill herself. Shakespeare has Lear's deranged and vivid sense of lust explode in the free flow of association on adultery in IV.vi.

Shakespeare, however, had earlier, in the storm, given Lear's misanthropy a more inclusive sweep:

> . . . thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world!
> Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That makes ingrateful man!

Father is not father. Father is sire. Child is not child. Child is bastard. Shakespeare has Edgar verbalize the nouns: Lear *childed*, tyrannized by wicked children; and he himself *father'd*, although he did not then know how readily Edmund had misled Gloucester. Lear is preoccupied with his daughter's ingratitude. In the storm, he has no sense of his own folly.

The king is not king. The king is but brittle authority, a presence, bejewelled and crowned. The king is not gold, but brass. The king is a cur.

> . . . see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief, Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?
> And the creature run from the cur,
> There thou migh'st behold
> The great image of authority:
> A dog's obeyed in office.
> Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
> Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
> Robes and furr'd gowns hide all . . . .

Momentarily, in the storm, Lear sees beyond the power and prestige of the king to a concern for the welfare of his subjects:

> Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this. Take physic, Pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
> And show the Heavens more just.

Thus, Shakespeare holds Lear's new awareness of the fuller and deeper natures of man, father, and king to fitful and transient moments. Those bright lights still flash from the shadowy and deranged awareness of a willful and dispossessed old man. Unlike his handling of Antony and Othello, whom he permits to voice their own errors in judgment, Shakespeare never permits a full sense of his failures in both his family and his kingdom to cross Lear's consciousness. Shakespeare has him state his regret for his stupid misjudgment of Cordelia and the consequent injustice to her. After Lear recovers from his madness, however, Shakespeare does not grant him any awareness of the condition of his kingdom following his division of it, and, more than that, any concern for it, whether tranquil or turbulent. Shake-

speare permits Lear to show no concern for the wicked wonders his folly and misjudgment have wrought. Lear is content to stay in prison with Cordelia—he and she, alone, singing like birds in a cage. Edmund and Goneril had Cordelia hanged; and Lear killed the slave that hanged her. As the feather stirs and Lear believes Cordelia may still live, Shakespeare has him say that her being alive now would redeem all sorrows that he has ever felt. Unlike Antony and Othello, Lear, in his dotage, after madness, sees scarcely at all that all that has happened has been the consequence of his failure to hold responsible command over his realm, his family, and himself. He still has a sense that dutiful daughters should pamper old fathers; this time, the right one will. That is just about as far as Shakespeare goes within Lear's restored consciousness: Behold an old king, momentarily at bliss with a wronged daughter, but finally overwhelmed, by agony and death.

Shakespeare, however, reminds his audiences and readers that a great deal more flows into the tragic horror of the piece. The flashes of insights into ideals which illumine Lear's flow of words in madness are shadowy conceptualizations which Shakespeare has all along let stand in direct contrast to the sharp actualities that have gored the state. Shakespeare and his audiences see Lear in the middle of these. Shakespeare does not let Lear see them at all: Lear, the king, in history, responsible for history, the father, responsible for family, a man, capable of humane manhood, has failed and has been only fitfully mindful of his failure. There he is, holding his dead daughter, a pietá for a pagan Trojan king of Britain; and there also, says Shakespeare, is the gored state.

Geoffrey of Monmouth returns power over the realm to Lear for three years before his death. Shakespeare has Albany resign his power to Lear; but Lear immediately dies, ironically, king of a realm he himself had divided and now shows no faculties for putting together again nor interest in doing so. Edmund stands at the center of the state, an Elizabethan Machiavel who gets and holds any power he may by any means.

> Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
> All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

Any villainy remorselessly may be a means to his one end: absolute power for himself:

> unnaturalness between the child and parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state; menaces and maledictions against King and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches. . . .

And in the wake of his rise to command over the armies of Regan and Goneril against those of Cordelia and France, Gloucester is blinded; Cornwall slain; the French armies defeated; Regan poisoned; Goneril, a suicide; Cordelia, hanged; Lear, a prisoner. Having manipulated the lives of so many so far, Edmund, to his own destruction, became unmindful of Edgar:

> Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,
> Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
> Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
> False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
> Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
> And, from th' extremest upward of thy head
> To the descent and dust below thy foot,
> A most toad-spotted traitor.

As an artists in villainy, Edmund, with his willing accomplices, broke, and did not unite, the realm. And an old, presumptuous king, Lear, with no artistry in wisdom, no sense of justice and compassion, helped in breaking it to pieces.

Shakespeare characteristically finds apt

metaphors which bring into piercingly clear focus the selves he dramatizes. Realizing that Kent's perceptive advice to Lear does not reach him, the Fool counters with his own advice to Kent:

> Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down hill, lest it break thy neck with following.

The metaphor echoes in Lear's awakening from madness:

> I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead.

When Gloucester asks to kiss his hand, Lear would wipe it first; it smells of mortality. And thereupon, the metaphor Shakespeare has Gloucester find for Lear: "O ruin'd piece of Nature!" The final benediction Shakespeare gives to Kent:

> Vex not his ghost: O! let him pass; he hates him
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer.

The tragedy of Lear is overtly the tragedy of a man who learned too little too late. His life reached its end before he knew how to live it. What he came, in frenzied glimpses, to know to be good, passed on in shadows, too late to be realized and sustained in substance. Lear had been a man, and yet a man unaccommodated, uncivilized. The transfiguration by art, compassion, and justice from man as animal into man as a human being, Lear had somehow missed; a maturing into a fully human and humane nature, lost. Lear had been a father, and yet a father whose children were but conveniences for his self-deceptions and his rashness. What a father may know about his children and do for and with them, Lear, even at the end, with Cordelia, never knew; in him, a meaningful fatherhood, lost. Lear had been a king, and yet not always, at least, a good king. With no thought of subjects and the tranquility of the realm, he, and Regan, and Goneril, and Edmund had gored the state; the true kingship, for him, irrecoverably lost.

Amid the turbulence of Lear's last days, Shakespeare so contrasts the substance of what Lear actually was with the fitful shadows of what Lear or any man, any father, any king should be, his almost willful mutilation of his identity as person is conspicuous. No wholeness has eventuated in his own uniting of ideals and actualities. It is doubly ironic that for him, unlike Antony and Othello, what he has actually done and been never penetrates his full consciousness. Shakespeare, I believe, beyond his having Lear ask Cordelia to forgive him, neither suggests nor dramatizes any sense of expiation or redemption in Lear. But thereby the onlooker's sense of his tragedy is deepened, as Shakespeare makes fully known Lear's actual self, in a mutilated state. In the fullness of his own vision of Lear, at every turn, Shakespeare counters what Lear is with what he might have been. The tragedy of Lear is unmistakable: in this play Shakespeare is equally and always mindful not only of the self that Lear actually is but also of the self that circumstances brought within reach but that Lear himself irrecoverably lost. No doctrinal fillip can mitigate or intensify the explicitness of this dramatic vision.

The Appearance-Reality Theme in *King Lear*

HARRIET DYE

The rich texture of King Lear *has often been noted. The exotic fabric of contrasted and paralleled threads has been meticulously unravelled in profitable attempts to disclose part of the secret of its power and its beauty. Much as the contemplation of the immense truth of human nature wrenches Lear's soul, the attempt to reach the definitive explication of this immense poem wrenches the soul and the intellect of the critic. We must be satisfied with investigation of its parts, in the hope that the sum of these investigations will illumine the magnificence of the whole. The purpose of this paper is to explore Shakespeare's complex orchestration of the appearance-reality theme in* King Lear. *The author's debt to A. C. Bradley, Theodore Spencer, C. F. Heilman, D. A. Traversi, J. F. Danby, and many others will be apparent, even when different conclusions have been reached while starting from their invaluable observations.*

THE WORLD IN WHICH the tragedy of King Lear takes place is vague and dark. The locations of Lear's castle and the castles of Albany and Cornwall are not made clear. Nor is it clear how so many messengers can be sent simultaneously to the same places, arrive at their destination only seconds apart, and never meet on the way. Most of the action takes place at night, or in the darkness of the storm, or in the figurative darkness of Gloucester's blindness. This blurring of locale suggests an immense world (ultimate reality) necessarily dim and gloomy because of man's inability to clearly comprehend reality. Man so beclouds reality with the superfluous—pomp, authority, reputation, clothing—that the truth can be approached only in Gloucester's physical blindness or in Lear's insanity. Lear's insanity takes the form of a mental blindness which so completely blots out the superfluities that a glimpse of the underlying nature can be discerned.

The heath, a wild, barren, never-never land, is always threatening to encroach on the castles and villages. Can we look on the heath as the elemental forces of nature (representing reality) tending to overcome the castles and towns, which, while they represent the artificial institutions societal man imposes on himself, are the only true refuge from the starkness of the elements? Societal man's existence depends indeed on the refuge offered by these institutions. At the same time the individual man must ever be aware that these institutions exist only to serve man. Once man begins to serve the institutions for their own sakes, he is confusing appearance with reality.

In Act I we see that Lear has confused effusive declaration of love for love itself. He asks only for the illusion of love and does not recognize the real thing when it confronts him. His mistake is even more fundamental in that he does not understand what love is. Lear wants to be loved, to be bathed in an adoration excited by promise of material reward. He does not conceive of love as a fulfillment of responsibility and duty with its accompanying full

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satisfaction of conscience. Lear would be satisfied with the appearance of love. Since he, apparently, is not capable of compassion and self-sacrificing love, he does not understand it when Cordelia embodies it.

Cordelia's devotion exists. To embroider it with flowery language would only serve to pervert it. Cordelia is incapable of camouflaging reality with the superfluous. In her naive, unsophisticated acceptance of what is, and her puzzled refusal to embroider it, she stands in direct contrast to Lear's tragic flaw—his inability to recognize the inner truth unless it is clothed with outer show. The reality of Cordelia's genuine devotion to her filial bond (which bond has no need of superficial declaration) is contrasted with Goneril's and Regan's artificial affirmation of this bond. There is no discrepancy between Cordelia's real self and the self she exhibits to others. It is interesting to note that Goneril and Regan, in their selfishness, their misconception of the nature of love, their quick use of flattery, their misuse of authority, exhibit many of Lear's traits which he attempts to rationalize under the guise of king and father. Cordelia's integrity and sense of duty are also the ideal against which Edmund's ingratitude is played. Edmund's philosophy is based on a reaction against "legitimacy," which idea is a product of custom superimposed by man on the natural order of life. So, in part, his revolt is against the artificialities with which man surrounds himself. In that his revolt is aimed, in a certain sense, at one of society's institutions and does not obtain exclusively from pure selfishness, Edmund's rebellion stands as a social extension of the rebellion of Goneril and Regan, whose actions are motivated by unmitigated self-love.

The three ingrates effect their rebellion by substitution of illusion for reality. Edmund's malignant conniving makes Edgar appear to be something he is not. Edmund distorts the real image of Edgar to serve his own evil purposes. Goneril would have her servants, contrary to their instincts as good servants, "Put on what weary negligence," they please to precipitate a quarrel with Lear. Albany is obviously successfully duped until late in the play. In the dramatic presentation of these forces of evil masking reality with illusion, Shakespeare has, in a marvelous handy-dandy, shown that these characters are suffering under no illusion as to the reality of their own decayed souls. Edmund, in his soliloquies, blatantly announces his selfish, power-hungry greed. Goneril and Regan, except for their glib hypocrisy during the division of the kingdom, are clearly and admittedly evil.

Let us apply the reality-appearance dichotomy to the nature-nurture theme of the play. Then let us assume (and I think it is not a rash assumption) that the nurture of Cordelia and that of her sisters must have been at least similar. In spite of this mutual common nurture, nature has inexplicably endowed Goneril and Regan with heartless traits. At the same time, nature has endowed them with at least a normal appearance. Their faces, their outward forms do not betray the decay of their inner selves. Why nature produces some warped, perverted souls, and some pure, virtuous souls is one of the primary concerns of the play. Exploring the discrepancy between appearance and reality is one of the devices Shakespeare uses to throw light on the exploration of the larger problem. Thus we see that Albany, when he is suddenly aware of Goneril's true ugliness of soul, would dislocate and tear her flesh and bones. He would mutilate her outward appearance to make it conform to the reality of her soul. Lear speaks of the awful discrepancy between his daughters' appearance and their true selves. "Those wicked creatures yet do look

well-favored,/When others are more wicked" (II.iv.259). When Lear is fully cognizant of Goneril's heartless ingratitude, he calls on Nature to suspend her purpose—to negate Goneril's existence as a woman and mother. Though Goneril is, to all outward appearance, a woman, Lear would have nature convey sterility into her womb, thereby making her body (a sterile, empty shell, or one which produces monsters) compatible with her monstrous soul. He would dissect Regan's flesh to see how the evil resides in it without manifesting itself outwardly. Edmund questions the justice of the "plague of nations" labelling him illegitimate when his "dimensions are as well compact," his "mein as generous and his shape as true" as any legitimate son (I.ii.6).

In this handy-dandy world, where trusted, indulged children turn on their parents like pelicans, and where evil forces prevail by deception (a use of appearance at the expense of reality), even the forces of good must work in disguise. Kent must exchange his noble attire for that of a lowly servant in order to follow his King and do him "service improper for a slave." Edgar, in order to effect good, must appear as the reality of man destitute of all superfluities.

The Fool, whose common sense is so intricately played against Lear's confusion and madness, represents yet another sort of misapprehension of the nature of man. The Fool speaks the wisdom of the practical world. He consistently recommends a counsel of self-interest. His first ditty, " 'Have more than thou showest,/Speak less than thou knowest,' " urges the blatant use of appearance to mask reality. This advice relates specifically to Lear's having lost his kingdom. However, all the Fool's advice is painfully inadequate, even irrelevant, as insight into Lear's basic problem—his inability to face the reality of the present moment with a full awareness of self and of the true nature of man. As the storm reaches its full fury, and Lear's insanity is leading to a glimpse of reality, the Fool would have Lear accept the illusion of refuge which the castle offers. "Court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain out o' door" (III.ii.10). The grossest sort of illusion, the flattery of great ones, is urged as preferable to the painful exposure to the elements and the harsh reality they represent. The Fool, along with his superficial philosophy, disappears when Lear's new insight (although by no means complete) creates an atmosphere completely hostile to the Fool's moral code.

Gloucester, his fate at the hands of an evil, ungrateful child paralleling that of Lear's, comes to an awareness of the falseness of superfluity when he asks the Heavens to "Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,/That slaves your ordinance, that will not see/Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly" (IV.i.70). He is concerned here with excesses primarily in terms of charity and does not discern their relationship to the ultimate reality of human nature. But Gloucester is a secondary character, and however closely his fate parallels that of Lear, his understanding is necessarily less complete. In addition to the dramatic necessity for Gloucester's perceptive powers being relatively shallow, we must recognize that his belief in superstition (a primitive, fantastical attempt to explain reality) precludes any illusion-piercing insight. The insight that Gloucester does achieve is effected by one of the most obvious misapprehensions of the play. Edgar, the good son in disguise, pretends to lead his blind father to his death at the cliffs of Dover. Through the illusion of death Gloucester is led to an acceptance of the afflictions of life—a form, however shadowy, of an acceptance of reality. Ironically, it remains for a blinding flash of truth

(Edgar's revelation of his identity) to bring death to Gloucester, when his "flawed heart—/Alack, too weak the conflict to support!—/'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,/Burst smilingly" (V.iii.196).

The clothing imagery of the play serves to unify the whole dramatic presentation of Lear's disintegration and subsequent partial regeneration. We find the clothing motif established early in the play when France, finding Lear's sudden fury incredulous, wonders how "she that even but now was your best object,/The argument of your praise, balm of your age,/. . . should in this trice of time/Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle/So many folds of favor" (I.i.217). And only a few lines later Cordelia refers to her sisters' cunning as "plaited." Lear picks up the clothing image again in Act II, scene iv, when he, for perhaps the first time, is experiencing the pangs of true psychological want. "Oh, reason not the need. Our basest beggars/Are in the poorest thing superfluous" (line 267). Lear is beginning to discover the difference between the true needs of the human animal and those which societal man has come to believe are essential. It is not until the storm scene that he understands, at least partially, that man's emotional needs, man's passions, can also become "gorgeous," out of keeping with his true basic needs. Indeed, man's material and emotional superfluity are all that differentiate him from the beast. The appearance of Edgar, vulnerable, "unaccommodated man," prompts the mad Lear to strip himself of "lendings," thus symbolically to shed all superfluities.

Lear's anxiety when faced with reality (both anxiety and reality symbolized in the storm) is excruciatingly intense, yet he seeks no physical refuge in the hut. The agony in Lear's soul would find no shelter there; he must come to grips with the truth. Only after he can identify with the "poor naked wretches," after he comprehends a common humanity shielded and at the same time distorted by common raiment does he enter the hut in order to discourse with his "philosopher."

The mad Lear, on meeting the blinded Gloucester, mixes "matter and impertinency" when he speaks of vice and virtue in terms of "tattered clothes," and "robes and furred gowns." Just before Lear awakes, his reason partially restored, the gentleman speaks of the fresh garments put on the king as if to suggest that society's institutions are necessary, that unaccommodated man cannot survive in his universe without them. This suggestion is repeated when Lear remarks, ". . . all the skill I have remembers not these garments" (IV.vii. 66). Implicit in this failure to recognize his clothing is the certainty that this Lear is a much, but not completely, changed man. He has gained some insight into the nature of man, but his knowledge is incomplete and has come too late. He still has need of the superfluity of at least simple clothing. In addition, his plans for a new, worthwhile relationship with Cordelia, while spoken in the highest poetry, imply a relatively shallow value system. He has paid dearly for his glimpse of reality, but at the tragic finale, he again mistakes appearance for reality. He believes Cordelia lives when she is in reality dead, ("Look on her, look, her lips,/Look there, look there!") and with a reminiscent "undo this button" is deceived by illusion for the last time.

Teaching Shakespeare: Is There a Method?

LOUIS MARDER

IF THE LIBERAL ARTS professors will cease rattling their sabres and put down their revolvers I shall be able to proceed with more ease. I know the cold stares and indignant looks that can unwelcome the proposition that we discuss the teaching of Shakespeare. At the South Atlantic Modern Language Association meeting in 1953 I introduced a resolution that we form a discussion group to look into the causes of student dissatisfaction with Shakespeare and only with difficulty secured a committee. There were murmurings about the strong hold that the George Peabody College for Teachers had in the South, and I suppose that had I made the same proposal in the Northeast I would have heard the same of the Teachers College of Columbia University.

We may as well face it. English professors who have not graduated from teachers colleges are irrevocably opposed to "method" as such, and each one is probably convinced that what he does is best—or else why would he be doing it.

Let me say at the outset that if by "method" one means the kind of indoctrination that student teachers might get by observing a class through a plate glass window transparent from only one side, I heartily agree that there is no "method" that is universally applicable. But there is method and frequently some madness in it. I taught my first Shakespeare course in 1947. By that time I was already a bardolater and had a nice collection of Shakespeareana. I was determined that my classes would be taught and would learn everything, for indeed all Elizabethan knowledge might throw some light on our interpretation of the plays. I gave a background of Elizabethan drama, gave a capsule view of some of the great writers active in contemporary literature and drama, and then lectured on Shakespeare's life by giving every date and event, and the significance of all that was known. As I left the class I heard a student who did not know I was behind him say, "Mr. Marder forgot to mention that Shakespeare went to the john in 1596." Well. . . . All of you know the feeling.

Next time I gave the course I gave some outline of drama, but no biography. I announced that we were to begin the first assigned play at the following session. Someone, as I had hoped, asked, "Aren't we going to study the life of Shakespeare?" I tried to look sheepish and said that it made no difference who wrote the plays and that frankly I was a Baconian. Needless to say there was an

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astonished gasp from the class. To "defend" myself I told them that I would "prove" that Bacon was the author at our next session. And I did; and I defied them to prove otherwise by bringing in the contrary evidence. Needless to say the next hour or two we had a marvelously vital knock-down drag-out session at the end of which I admitted my imposture and proved that really I myself had written the plays. I referred them to a list of plays I had put on the board presumably as a reading list but so arranged that by drawing two vertical lines through the eleven titles my name was seen to be written out between them and with the numerical position of the letters totalling my birthday. This, I submit, is method.

Sometimes I do the biography in an orthodox manner, sometimes I don't introduce any biography until I come, for example, to a discussion of Adriana's shrewishness in *The Comedy of Errors*. Then I discuss Shakespeare's marriage in all its implications even to the possibility that the interlineation in the will leaving Anne the second best bed is a forgery. That he left Anne to go to London brings us to Shakespeare's educational background, the influence of Plautus in Latin, what were his possible occupations, etc. All discussion is for the purpose of explicating the immediate text and the plays to follow. Call this technique, call it method, call it merely teaching; the end is the same: giving the student as much background as possible without reducing his interest in, or enjoyment of the course.

If we admit, as we must, that there are goals in teaching, then there must be means to those ends. And if we admit there are means to an end, it may well be that some means are better than others. But at this point matters become complicated. What aims and ends do teachers of Shakespeare have? Is it enough to say that the goal of our teaching Shakespeare is the same as the goal for teaching all literature: the intelligent appreciation and enjoyment of what man has thought and written for posterity? Certainly that is the basis, but with Shakespeare there is so much more.

With no intention of being exhaustive we may readily admit the following goals as among those the well informed teacher is seeking to achieve in an interesting and stimulating manner:

Literary: appreciation and enjoyment of drama as a genre with its subdivisions of farce, comedy, tragedy, history, and romance; Shakespeare's language, poetry, and structure.

Dramatic: history of theatre, stage, acting, dramatic reading and interpretation.

Social: understanding of mankind and his culture through moral, religious, ethical, political, philosophical, historical, economic, and social aspects of drama.

Personal: self-development, imaginative exercise, ability to understand man under tension, the ability to laugh at life, the ability to listen, read, observe, think, speak, and write. That Shakespeare was eminently suited to illustrate these aims was admitted, to seek no later proof, by Ben Jonson in his 1623 eulogy declaring that Shakespeare "was not of an age but for all time," and by John Dryden who in his essay "Of Dramatic Poesie" (1668) wrote that Shakespeare "was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul."

Having stated the major aims, and noted their variety, it becomes ludicrous to think that there could be *a* method of instilling all, or even those parts which the teacher might care to stress, in our students. Though there might be fifty goals or a hundred yet there might be as many methods as there are teachers. Each of these methods would have to be adapted to the teacher's ability, imagination, and knowledge, and the academic level of the students and their destination.

What then do teachers do? One teacher teaching *As You Like It* was more bored than his high school students who were daydreaming. When he suddenly thought that their daydreams were like those who "dream" of happiness in the Forest of Arden, he made all of them disclose their thoughts. The class became alive and all went well. Insofar as the discussion returned to the play, this might be acceptable. But seven years later this same teacher tried to develop a unit in *Macbeth* and concluded that for 95% of the students the play was too difficult. (G. H. Henry, "Escaping As You Like It," *E.J.*, 30 [June 1941], 443-49; and "The Growth of a Unit," *E.J.*, 37 [September 1948], 341-47).

Since Shakespeare's value is and has been appreciated for many generations, it is probably correct to say that most failures in awakening student enthusiasm are attributable to lack of "knowledge" of the subject and lack of method to apply what is known.

When we find that many teachers write articles complaining that their students are bored, that they find Shakespeare too ancient, that "Shakespeare is a name which serves merely to produce shivers," (Mary H. Watson, "Macbeth Outgrows the Classroom," *EJ*, 39 [Jan. 1950], 33-34), or that they "hate" Shakespeare (Dakin, 332), the college professor may well wonder what he has taught his future teachers which has sent them out to leave such impressions in the minds of their students.

Telling future teachers that Shakespeare is a great man will not make them good teachers; telling them that Shakespeare is *good* for them though a bitter pill won't do it either. Neither will reading the play to them do; or just leaving them with the plot and some quotations. This would hardly challenge a grammar or high school student. Those who are going to teach Shakespeare must understand him fully. They must be able to take the play apart and put it back together again with a clearer idea of what Shakespeare has done with the poetry, plot, and people. They must see the play develop out of apparent harmony into a conflict which frequently ends in death, or bypasses death in some way, leading to a happy ending. They must be able to trace the suspenseful rise of the action and the involvement of the characters in all possible ramifications so that they may be able to transmit some of Shakespeare's excitement to their students. They should be fired with some of the zeal for blank verse and its juxtaposition to prose; with some inkling of imagery and its impact (let us say by noting the effect of the word "blood" in *Macbeth);* with some idea of the dynamic spirit of the age then on the threshold of the English Renaissance, and with some idea of Shakespeare's contribution to it. And this should not be done only during the "introduction" to the course but used to enlighten any part of the plays where the ideas are appropriate.

It will be immediately insisted on by all teachers that this is exactly what they are doing in their classes, and I do not deny it. Yet articles continue to be written based on the supposition that Shakespeare is boring and students dislike him. Since a distaste for Shakespeare cannot be innate in those who have not studied him, it is the more probably transmitted by other students, who were bored by their teachers, and who passed on this boredom to their classmates. How many of us have had advisees who refuse to sign up for a Shakespeare class because their high school experience has developed in them an aversion?

What is past is prologue. That there is a problem I think will be admitted. That there is no solution is equally admissible. It might be that many of those who go out to teach would *know how to teach* if they first knew *what to teach.* For those who are seeking a basic "what to teach" idea I offer the structural analysis of the play. I am primarily con-

cerned with the *what*—the structure—and include the "how" only when it illustrates or clarifies the point.

From my own experience I find that an analysis of dramatic structure is an interesting and effective way of entering the heart of the play and working through it. The structure becomes a convenient peg on which to hang the characterization and all else that suits the goals of the teacher.

It is the one element that permeates the play from the opening word to the final line. It is at once static in that the whole play is there complete, and yet dynamic in that the parts are continually interrelating with one another.[1] This can be illustrated by drawing on the board an open cube and labelling the four lines of each side as follows:

BOTTOM LINES: Source, Treatment of Source, Dramatic Conventions, Period and Setting

SIDE LINES: Imagery and Symbolism, Versification and Prose, Language, Choice and Motivation

TOP LINES: Theme (Treatment of Life), Philosophy, Characterization, Catharsis

More factors could be added if desired by making the figure into an octagon. Frequently I place this structure on a set of diagrammed wooden horses labelled Text, Bibliographical Criticism, Shakespeare's Biography and Personality, Historical and Interpretative Criticism, and Conjecture and Controversy. These too might be interrelated by an experienced teacher.

With this kind of structure in mind, it may be easier to see what is going on in the play. It is better visualized when little arrows are drawn pointing to the center to indicate that all of these are constantly interacting visually and aurally, emotionally and intellectually, fictionally and actually on every line of the play.

If the teacher has the resources to develop the structure, he should be able to make any play come vividly to life. As little or as much might be used depending on whether the class is of elementary school age or doctoral candidates or whether the students were dramatizing scenes or listening to lectures.

With this overall view in mind, a close analysis of structure can be attempted. A student "sees" a play better when he sees it in Aristotelian terms; a plot has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Once students are told that a beginning is that which has nothing before and something following, they readily see that a middle is that which has something before and something following, and that an end is that which has something before and nothing following. Under analysis they see that there *was* something before, but that it is not appropriate to the artistic beginning of the play. Hamlet is born, but he is of no concern to us until the Ghost of his father comes to narrate the manner of his death. Students are then able to formulate for themselves the concept that a play begins *in medias res* and are then more readily prepared to look for the antecedent action—the fact that Hamlet has just returned from school, that his uncle has married his mother, that his uncle is now king.

Why did Shakespeare not begin with all this antecedent action? Obviously it would not have been significant because it would have been too long before the Point of Change—that point which makes the action of the play begin to rise toward its crisis and climax. Every play, every work of fiction, begins with a Point of Change—a Motive Force—which students can be made to see as an artistic point carefully considered by the author. (Aegeon and Antipholus of Syracuse arrive in Ephesus, Orlando decides to seek his fortune, Macbeth is expected

[1] Cf. G. Wilson Knight, *Principles of Shakespearian Production* (London, 1936), Chapter 2.

by the Witches, Bolingbroke has come to challenge Mowbray, Pandarus has agreed to intercede between Troilus and Cressida). Once this point is established, the student has the clue to most of the subsequent action: the effect of the change on the main character, its impact on the plot, and the resultant effect on all the other characters. Other events will be important, but the first one is the one that provides the motivation and starts the action going.

The various kinds of middles lead to the consideration of other matters, but first it is useful to start another structure—that of Life in general.[2] Here too, a diagrammed structure can be evolved. Although every play has antecedent action which is significant and indicates that all was not as it should be in the world, yet so far as the play itself goes, we must consider that there is order and harmony until the Point of Change introduces a new and decisive factor.

This structure considers not the play so much as it considers the life in the play: order existed, something occurs to disrupt it, order must be restored before the play can end. On the left of a diagram illustrating this we would write Order, Harmony, Peace, Ignorance of Evil. These lead by diagonal lines to a central event which introduces an evil into society: disruption of the state, family, society. This point might be labelled Chaos, Calamity, Conflict, Destruction of Institutions, and Knowledge of Evil. From this point we have arrows leading to the ensuing Problems, Emotional Conflicts, Tensions, Mental Torment, Frustrations, Inhibitions, Desire for Release, Satisfaction, or Revenge. Because human beings cannot live under such conditions, release must be sought which we label Flight to Seek Release, Flight to the Ideal, or Flight from Reality, a place where the tensions are either reduced, forgotten, or eliminated. Note in how many plays characters flee into a neighboring forest (*Two Gentlemen of Verona, As You Like It, Midsummer Night's Dream*), into disguise (*Comedy of Errors, Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure, Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Taming of the Shrew, All's Well, Twelfth Night, Cymbeline*), into madness (*Hamlet* and *Titus*), into another sex (Rosalind, Viola, Jessica, Imogen), into a hidden existence (Hermione and Hero). In this "ideal world" a mediating factor—a person or an event—is found (love, reform, understanding, knowledge of the truth) which leads to the end which is a Restoration of Normalcy, Harmony, Order. This is not only the structure of drama, it is the very basis of literature and of life.

Frequently I illustrate this structure to a class by means of a rubber band or a ruler. When all is at order the rubber band is at its normal length; it can remain that way always. Supply the slightest amount of tension to the rubber band (the play) and no longer are matters at rest. However slight the tension there is always a point to which it must return when released; it will never stay at the new length without tension. In a play, more and more tension is supplied to our rubber band by the events and characters until a point is reached at which the slightest infinitesimal pull will break it. At this point the mediating factor has to be introduced to release the tension. If the tension is released, the play will be a comedy. If not released the crisis continues; if more tension is supplied, tragedy results. With a ruler a similar technique is used. When the ruler lies flat, all is well; when it stands firmly upright all may be well; but tilt it ever so slightly and all equilibrium vanishes; it must right itself or fall; it cannot remain unbalanced. The observation of the play or life in this manner is used to make the student note those events which add to the tension and thus

[2] Cf. Denton J. Snider's studies in *The Shakespearian Drama: A Commentary*, 3 Vols. (St. Louis, 1887-91).

to the development of interest (suspense) in the outcome of the action. He will see the author supplying more and more problems (tensions) to the protagonist and his antagonists and look forward more eagerly to the possibility of release or destruction. He might be made to see more clearly the development of the crisis and the climax of the play. All could become clear and all the cubed factors could be brought into focus on this point. For example, the teacher might introduce Shakespeare's sources here to illustrate differences of technique: Gertrude's known guilt in Shakespeare's source as compared with her ambiguity in Shakespeare; the fact that Cassandra in the source of *Measure for Measure* is a married woman while Shakespeare makes her a virgin and a novice in a nunnery; the doubling of the twins in the *Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare increases the tensions on the characters by making the possible choices the more difficult to make. Life is difficult enough for Romeo and Juliet because they are members of feuding families, but the tensions are increased by the impetuousness of their love, their desire for immediate marriage, the killing of Tybalt, the banishment of Romeo, the immediacy of the second marriage to Paris, the delay of the message to Romeo, and so on. Juliet's flight from reality is into her trance-like sleep, but the mediating Friar fails due to accident and the end is tragedy.

A comic version of this structure is exemplified in *As You Like It* where hatred and greed are introduced to life at the court and its associates by twin examples of brother versus brother conflict leading to usurpation and denial of patrimony. As a result of these actions Duke Senior, Orlando, Adam, Celia, Rosalind, Touchstone, Duke Frederick, and Oliver become denizens in the Forest of Arden where they hope to achieve their ends. With love as the mediating factor and Rosalind as the mediator, four marriages are arranged, the brothers are reunited through love and reformation, and order is restored. Since the ideal has been achieved all return (except Jaques) to the Court where we may presume they live happily forever after.

Separation and Return may itself be utilized as a kind of Shakespearean structure since he uses it so frequently in his plays. In *The Tempest, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Comedy of Errors, Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, All's Well, Twelfth Night, The Winter's Tale, King Lear, Cymbeline,* and *Pericles,* and to some extent actually and symbolically in other plays, Separation and Return is the structure on which the play turns. Once this key is applied to a play or plays, the other events are seen as leading in some way to the eventual solution and every facet of the play becomes an interesting part of the search for reunion.

Last but not least of the methods of structural analysis is the application of the Freytag formula. Gustav Freytag was to modern dramatic structure what Aristotle was to classic drama. *The Technique of Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* was written in 1863 and passed through six German editions before it was translated into English in 1894 by Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago, Second Edition, 1896). Apparently its influence was very strong, for I have read that the publication of Andrew Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) was received with great glee because teachers could now free themselves from the tyranny of analyzing Shakespeare by means of the Freytag formula and turn to psychological analysis instead. Lucia B. Mirrielees in her *Teaching Composition and Literature in Junior and Senior High School,* (N. Y. 1937; I quote from the 1952 edition, p. 436) blacklisted the formula by saying that a play "is not a geometric puzzle to be worked out upon the Freytag de-

sign." I will admit her conclusion that a play is not a puzzle but "a *play* demanding actors, the human voice, and audience"; yet an English class for young people must be more than a mock theater where children learn by doing. Shakespeare is Shakespeare with all the implications that the statement entails. I am not opposed to acting nor any other device including the carving of Shakespearean characters in soap, but the teacher should be able to do more than assign parts. A knowledge of structure is basic. Even the youngest of children understand structure: try to omit one of the piggies in the "This Little Piggy Went to Market" rhyme or one of the pigs in *The Story of the Three Little Pigs* and see what happens.

Acting, reading, and oral interpretation are but means to greater ends and one of the means to get to those ends is the understanding of how a Shakespeare play works. The Freytag formula is improperly used *when its formulation becomes an end in itself*, as would be any of the structures I have outlined above. But when it is used as a means to the goals indicated earlier, it becomes a valuable tool. Students should know the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet too, but to derive great satisfaction solely from the students' ability to say that a Shakespearean sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter rhyming abab cdcd efef gg, frequently divided into octave and sestet, is to miss the point of teaching. The structure is an aid to understanding the sonnet; but the content of the sonnet, not its structure, is supposed to stimulate the mind and give the enjoyment.

Briefly stated, the Freytag formula calls for six parts with two others optional. Every play has an Introduction, an Exciting Force, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Catastrophe or Denouement. Good but not indispensable are a Tragic Force after the climax, and a Moment of Final Suspense which comes before the denouement and is discoverable in most plays. To these I have found it necessary to add what I call a Crisis immediately before the Climax of the play. Before explaining these I should say that the teacher need never use these terms in class if he feels they will confuse the students; but to show how the action of the play develops and to what ends, the appropriate steps are a useful device.

The Introduction sets the scene, introduces the characters, gives some of the antecedent action, and often suggests the prevailing mood. The Ghost scene in *Hamlet*, the Witch scene in *Macbeth*, Orlando's opening statement in *As You Like It* are cited here merely to recall the effect.

The Exciting Force is that event which stimulates the rest of the action of the play. It is the Point of Change I mentioned earlier. In *Julius Caesar* it is the plan to kill Caesar, in *Romeo and Juliet* it is the meeting of the lovers, in *Macbeth* it is the prophecy of the Witches.

The Rising Action consists of all the events and complications which lead to the Crisis of the play. The Crisis may be compared with the highest point of tension of the rubber-band analogy previously cited. By the time of Crisis, the action has come to a point where the play may turn to either comedy or tragedy based on the decision of the protagonist at this particular point. Because the making of a decision involves reflection on the part of the character, whether of long or short duration, I frequently call this point Duration of Decision. In *The Comedy of Errors* Balthasar is trying to persuade Antipholus of Ephesus not to break into his own house by means of a crowbar. For twenty-two lines he pleads with Antipholus. At their conclusion Antipholus declares, "You have prevailed: I will depart in quiet" (III.2.107). Had he broken in, he would have met his twin

brother and ended the play (and incidentally have left Aegeon his father to perish by nightfall). In *The Merchant of Venice* Bassanio stands before the caskets and deliberates for thirty-five lines before he chooses the proper casket (III.2.107). The Duration of Decision in both these examples is the Crisis. The final choice is the Climax of the play, for from those decisions the rest of the action develops. Sometimes the Climax may be called the Point of No Return, this being the crucial action or choice in the life of the character. Frequently the point is seen more easily when looking back from the end of the play. For example, as we look back over Richard II's actions we see that at III.3.196 Bolingbroke makes his final statement: "My gracious lord, I come but for mine own." At this point Richard apparently might have still returned Bolingbroke's lands and titles and Bolingbroke should have departed satisfied; but Richard replies, "Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all." From this point there is no return possible.

The Climax having been reached, the Falling Action begins. Naturally the author cannot have the play deteriorate and just coast to an end, so new problems and conflicts are introduced, some of them involving major crises that seem to give some plays two climaxes. In *Romeo and Juliet* Mercutio is killed by Tybalt who runs away for a space of thirty-two lines. When he is seen returning, Romeo cries, "Away to heaven, respective lenity, And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now" (III.1.129). The die has been cast, he has chosen personal rather than legal revenge and immediately kills Tybalt, sealing his doom—the climax of the play. But possibly there is a second climax when Juliet is placed in a position where she too has to choose between marriage to Paris or family ostracism. The Friar's potion resolves the difficulty, momentarily, but the play goes on to its catastrophic ending. Hamlet's decision not to kill Claudius as he is praying may be considered the Climax of that play for he gets no further opportunity and he dies for missing it. Yet some critics consider the killing of Polonius the Climax because by that murder Hamlet loses his innocence and Nemesis has to follow.

The Tragic Force, when it is present, occurs after the climax. If the killing of Polonius is not a second Climax, it is the Tragic Force which impels further action. Freytag gives the election of Coriolanus to the Consulship as the Climax of that play and his almost immediate banishment because of his pride as the Tragic Force which incites the subsequent action.

The Moment of Final Suspense comes before the ending at a point where the falling action has created enough suspense in the mind of the observer that he thinks there is yet some hope for the protagonist's safety in a tragedy. In a comedy it may occur where some additional disillusionment precedes the final happy outcome. The hope that Romeo may get to the Capulet monument in time to save Juliet or the doubt that Macbeth can be killed in battle since he is invulnerable to man born of woman are such points in tragedy. In *Measure for Measure* when the Duke seems to refuse to listen to Isabella's accusation of Angelo in the last act and when Katharina is sent for by Petruchio, there may still be some belief that Angelo may avoid his fate or that the Shrew is not tamed.

The Catastrophe or Denouement is the ending of the play where all turns out as it should and all is explained to the audience implicitly by the events or explicitly by a character in the play. Even before this point, and sometimes it occurs before the Moment of Final Suspense, Freytag cites a Moment of Final Force which seals the idea of a play inevitably as a tragedy. The Ghost of Caesar when it appears to Brutus re-

minds us that Brutus has the guilt of his ruler on his hands; the killing of Paris at the Capulet tomb re-emphasizes Romeo's tragic guilt. Claudius plans the murder of Hamlet with Laertes, stressing more than his earlier confession his guilt and necessary death before the play ends.

Those who want further information I must refer to Freytag's own book, but I hope it will be obvious that the German scholar has given us a plan for structural analysis of a play that is very far from obsolete and applicable—as all these structural plans are—to all of fictional literature and even to life itself, which, after all, fiction imitates. That the teacher will have to apply himself to the play with diligence—and perhaps arrive at ambiguous crises and climaxes —is apparent, but once the structure is arrived at, the entire play becomes dynamic, every event falls into place, every word and image will be seen leading to the desired effect, every action and soliloquy be seen as adding to the interest and suspense of the plot, and the play understood a little more clearly at the least and a lot more clearly at the most than it ever was before.

Frequently to fix the idea firmly in mind I make an analogy between the Freytag formula and a disease. At the Introduction the person is well. At the Exciting Force he is exposed to a contagious disease. For a while he thinks he may not have caught it, or is immune. The Rising Action begins when his temperature begins to rise and subsequent symptoms of aches, pains, eruptions, and complications increase the virulence of the disease. At the Crisis the temperature has become so extreme that the doctors know that the slightest increase will be beyond what any human has survived before. This Duration of Decision is the number of hours or days that the temperature stays at that point. The Climax is reached when the temperature rises so that death will become inevitable, or falls and the patient will survive. A Tragic Force may enter with, let us say, a slight temporary paralysis to complicate matters, and the Falling Action is the movement to life or death. The Moment of Final Suspense may be a sudden recurrence of a symptom, but that is overcome and the conclusion follows. Or it might be done by making an analogy to a race. Here we have a line up, the discharge of the starter's pistol, the fighting for position, and the eventual emergence of two leaders who run neck and neck for a while until one forges ahead. But there is still danger that the race might be lost and at one moment the loser might even close the gap, but the winner comes out ahead in the end.

Like all essays on teaching, this may well be a conclusion in which nothing is concluded. Educationists may say, "You are not teaching a subject; you are teaching students!" My natural reply is, "I am teaching students a subject!" If we are to use Shakespeare as a means of enriching minds, refining tastes, exercising intellects, stimulating imaginations, deepening sympathies, developing emotional maturity, and stimulating love for literature—worthy goals to say the least —we must think not merely of teaching Shakespeare but think of doing it in the best way possible. Structure is one of many approaches emphasized here because it should be considered basic.

The application of any method depends on the imagination and background of the teacher. The inquiring and alert teacher will try everything—and whether he is teaching ninth graders, or undergraduate or graduate students who are to become teachers and scholars, he may find something here —especially if he has never before attempted structural analysis—that is useful; and he should find enough resource material in his library or in his experience to make it work.

Shakespeare in the High School Classroom

Gladys Veidemanis

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During the years I have been teaching English, I have had many occasions to remember an experience with my warm-hearted Norwegian landlady of college days, whom I found one day skeptically leafing through my Shakespeare anthology. Almost despairingly she sighed to me, "Vy you vant to read dis Shake-es-spear for anyhow? I yust can't make ups nor downs out of it!" Unfortunately, neither can many of our students, however vigorously we may try to transmit our enthusiasm and to minimize reading difficulties. Igniting the flame of lasting interest in and appreciation of Shakespeare is actually a more demanding, complicated, and elusive undertaking than most of us would like to admit.

The testimony of English teachers in various educational journals, however, conveys quite a different impression. The typical article is a glowing success story, presenting, for example, enthusiastic accounts of eighth graders or sophomores who have adeptly avoided the major reading pitfalls, gone off independently on their own into *Lear* or *Othello*, and produced penetrating discussions on Shakespeare's psychological insights and contemporary outlook. Most of these articles also manage to imply (rather explicitly!) that the writer has found a sure-fire way of avoiding all the teaching mistakes that once made the study of Shakespeare for him such a tedious bore when he was a student in some unenlightened English class. After reading of such achievements, we may, like Brutus, feel compelled to abandon our stars and suffer indictment for personal inadequacies and unimaginative teaching. These blithe success stories, however, frankly leave me skeptical. In all honesty, it is impossible to avoid the recognition that both the teaching and studying of Shakespeare are exacting, often frustrating tasks, necessitating thorough, perceptive, informed study, for which there are no painless shortcuts or easy formulas. Lasting appreciation can never be won by merely trying to "unbury the bard" or "get a kick out of Will."

Yet, while some of our teaching problems are patently inherent in the task itself, surely others we manage to bring upon ourselves either by burdening our units with gimmicks and substitutes for the actual work at hand, or, on the other extreme, by a pedantry that crushes the endeavor before it gets underway. Knowledge of the layout of the Globe Theater, the facts of Shakespeare's life, or the clothing, customs, and history of Elizabeth's reign can indisputably enrich a student's background; yet, these considerations, overemphasized, can also become substitutes for and barriers to genuine reading and analysis of the play itself. It is also not uncommon for the Shakespearean unit to become the vehicle for a teacher's extended virtuoso performance, surely highly relaxing for stu-

dents, since they are left almost nothing to do but sit back and admire, but hardly educating. Indeed, disproportionate or inappropriate emphases, poor timing, and over-popularizing tactics, such as those listed below, are perhaps responsible for most of our frustrating and unsatisfying teaching experiences:

1) Too much time spent on unrelated art and history projects; too little concentrated attention on the written text itself.

2) Overexhaustive study of a single play—bleeding it dry. (Would we not do better to adhere to the maxim: "Better to underteach than overteach"?)

3) Too much attention to footnotes, criticism, emendations to the extent that the play becomes burdened beyond the difficulties it already presents of itself.

4) Too much "rapture" or virtuousness surrounding the venture—the feeling that "at last we are on something really worthwhile, and even though this is painful, it's good for you!"

5) Too much teacher reading and explication with too little endeavor to teach students to read and comprehend Shakespeare for themselves.

6) Too much popularizing or trying overhard to make Shakespeare "hep" or "a snap"; using comic books or cheapened versions which eliminate the flavor of the original style.

7) Pushing Shakespeare on students who are too immature to handle it or are incapable.

Somehow, the way must be found to an approach that is mature, yet not stuffy; scholarly, without being pedantic; dramatic, yet also literary; thorough, but not exhausting; contemporary as well as universal. In view of these demands, it should be apparent at once that, in the study of any Shakespearean play, we can only hope to make an introduction to what requires a lifetime intimacy for full savoring and appreciation. Further, we might do well to remember W. H. Auden's comment that every one of Shakespeare's works is unique, and to get a proper idea of the Shakespearean world, the reader must experience them all. He further admonishes that "No one is less a writer for the young, for persons, that is, under the age of thirty."[1] Difficult, mature, demanding—Shakespearean drama calls upon the full resources of a teacher's creativity, persuasiveness, and careful planning if it is to become something more than a time to read out loud or stoically endure. In particular, the classroom teacher must come to some decisions about the following teaching problems: 1) where to place the focus of attention; 2) how to teach students to read the verse for themselves and perceive its variety and imagery; and 3) how to fit Shakespearean study into the curriculum and in what detail.

Since there is such diversity in philosophy and approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare, it is a risky matter to try to lay down any definitive resolutions of these problems, since, obviously, what works for one teacher may not necessarily work for another. The following discussion is thus ventured primarily as a statement of personal belief, which, hopefully, may prove helpful for others in determining the direction and pattern of classroom activity.

The Problem of Attention

While Shakespeare fills his plays with considerable attractions for the "groundlings"—murders, quarrels, suicides, duels, insanity, slapstick comedy, patriotic fervor, and spectacle—his essential appeal is to the ear, to the mind, to refined perception. The problem of attention, then, is basically that of luring students beyond basic plot concerns to an examination of (1) character, (2) ideas, (3) language,

[1] W. H. Auden, "Three Memoranda on the New Arden Shakespeare," *The Mid Century*, No. 21, (January 1961), p. 3.

and (4) structure—and perhaps in that order of priority. To begin with, students must learn that a play can be enjoyable even when the plot is known in advance. Like the more sophisticated members of the Greek or Elizabethan audience, they must learn to anticipate and enjoy the unique treatment of a previously worked subject and to let language more than spectacle and action work upon their imagination and emotions. Robert Ornstein has well observed that ". . . the relatively bare Elizabethan stage was perfectly suited to the drama of great personalities which Shakespeare created," for his heroic characters dwarfed their background and shaped their worlds and their own destinies.[2] Dominant attention, thus, should be concentrated upon the inner conflicts with which these characters struggle and the consequences of their actions—and especially upon the language which they use to define these conflicts. So organized, the unit on Shakespeare becomes, above all, a humanistic study, an exploration of his view of man—"the paragon of animals," capable of hypocrisy, evil, and superficiality, yet redeemable through suffering and the painful passage to self-knowledge.

It is important, too, not only to raise the usual questions about characterization—how the characters are revealed, what functions they fulfill, and how they change throughout the course of the play—but also to point out the source of their continuing fascination and appeal. In the first place, the Shakespearean hero *is* a genuine collosus, bestriding the narrow world, surmounting his environment, and affirming the worth of man. Further, he is invariably a paradoxical figure—neither dated, circumscribed, or definitively revealed—and therefore capable of engaging our continuing interest and diverse examinations. With heroes of the complexity of a Hamlet, Lear, or Othello, students will have to learn to abjure easy black and white classifications and automatic pigeon-holding. In addition, Shakespeare's characters are extremely real and human, mixtures of good and evil, the bestial and the sublime, wrestling with and clarifying problems which men of all periods have struggled to resolve. According to Margaret Webster: "The reality of Shakespeare's people is what has made them last three hundred and fifty years. The cardboard figure and the manufactured joke do not last three hundred and fifty days."[3] The appeal of his characters and plays is perhaps particularly intense in our modern age because of their testimony to the worth of life and the need for the restoration of goodness and order in human affairs:

> What does Shakespeare say to an era that feels that the times are out of joint? He does not renounce the world or wallow in self-pity. He is the poet of this-worldliness; he celebrates love, food, drink, music, friendship, conversation, and the changing, changless beauties of Nature. Though life is time's fool, Shakespeare posits the ideal of the mature man ("Ripeness is all") who distills his experiences into common sense and uncommon wisdom.[4]

Travis Bogard has eloquently commented that no one better understood human nature or saw man more clearly both without and within. As he has suggested, we would be a more brutal people had Shakespeare not lived, for he told us who and what we are and reminded us that man's actions are capable of integrity and grace.[5]

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[2]Robert Ornstein, *Shakespeare in the Classroom.* (Urbana, Ill.: Educational Illustrators, 1960), pp. 5-6.

[3]Margaret Webster, "Shakespeare in Our Time," *The Living Shakespeare,* Robert Gittings, ed., (London, 1960), p. 22.

[4]"To Man from Mankind's Heart," *Time,* Vol. 76, (July 4, 1960), p. 71.

[5]Travis Bogard, "Teaching Shakespeare," paper read at the NCTE annual convention, San Francisco, November 22, 1963.

The Problem of Verse

Once Shakespeare has become part of ourselves, absorbed in the resonance of our speech and the contexts of remembrance, it becomes very easy to forget the problems we once faced in our own first encounters with his verse and language. In fact, we may be inclined to impatience with students' floundering, overlooking our responsibility to teach them to read this poetic drama for themselves. T. S. Eliot, in "The Three Voices of Poetry," reminds us that the poetic line in drama bears the weight of three responsibilities: conveying plot and character while retaining its poetic form. Students must thus be helped to develop a series of reading skills that work together. First, they need to learn to read blank verse without halting at the end of each line or being trapped by occasional archaic expressions or extended figures of speech. Some passages are surely better left unexplicated, while with others the rhythm and feel should be left to communicate for themselves. Students must also be brought to perceive how particular passages reflect the character traits of individual speakers, advance plot, and suggest the tone of a specific scene. For example, they should be able to discern how Polonius' mishandling of language parallels his mismanagement of human affairs, how Laertes betrays a strain of superficiality by indulging in florid bombast at Ophelia's graveside, or how Hamlet's shifts from introspection and depression to passionate anger with himself and the world are precisely reflected by the variety of his discourse, the quality of his diction. Similarly, the student should become skilled enough to detect that Orsino and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, in their love and grief, obviously "protest too much," as the later events of the play confirm; or that Brutus and Antony, in their funeral rhetoric, not only eulogize Caesar and sway the mob, but simultaneously reveal themselves and their highly contrasting personal values and political philosophies.

Students must further be taught to discover how richly Shakespeare uses imagery to enforce mood, emotion, character, thought. For example, how repeatedly throughout the history plays he apostrophizes sleep to emphasize the wearying responsibility of a king upon whose head "uneasy" lies the crown. Using the images of disease, plague, disruption, insanity, and revolt in *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, Shakespeare succeeds in conveying the very atmosphere of states whose social organization has suffered violent change and upheaval. When Macbeth speaks of "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury," he is transmitting at once a capsule life-view of a man who has gambled wildly and indiscriminately—and lost; who has come full circle and must face at last the consequences of his actions. Elder Olson comments that, by contemplating the imagery of Macbeth's language in this major scene, we most profoundly comprehend what at last Macbeth himself must despairingly concede: "The man who murders his own nature becomes a ghost, a walking shadow; the man who builds on vain hope is a poor player in a mere pretense of action, whose very noise is soon silence; the man who takes folly for wisdom and falsity for truth makes his life an unmeaning tale.[6] For Shakespeare, imagery is never just decoration, but the mirror of meaning.

Shakespeare's verse also needs to be studied for its own sake as poetry, particularly for its precise word choice, skillfully suggestive overtones, and unified construction. Rather than wearying every line with exhausting interpretation, however, we need to vary discussion and assignment procedures, letting one pas-

[6]Elder Olson, "Tragedy and the Theory of Drama, *The English Leaflet*. LXI, No. 3, (Fall 1962), p. 11.

sage, for example, serve as a reflection of an inner state of mind, another as revealing specific character traits, yet another to show contrast and irony. The following assignments work particularly well to develop these kinds of reading proficiency:

1) Hand out a series of statements based on a soliloquy and ask students to check those which actually correspond to statements in the text. Students are surprisingly inexact in close reading and need occasional exercises like this where they must defend their contentions.

2) Give out two or three isolated passages and ask students to make as many character inferences as possible from the given material. Then restore the passages to context, exploring further their multiple functions within the specific scene and for the total characterization.

3) Before starting the reading of a play, read over the following list of expressions, asking students to identify where they have heard them before:

it was Greek to me
an itching palm
a dish fit for the gods
every inch a king
What's in a name?
a fool's paradise
the green-eyed monster
pomp and circumstance
the seamy side
wear my heart on my sleeve
the crack of doom
the milk of human kindness
a sorry sight
merry as the day is long
with fear and trembling
give the devil his due
dead as a doornail
little pitchers have big ears
he has eaten me out of house and home
in a pickle
sink or swim
long and short of it
too much of a good thing
flaming youth
in my mind's eye
plain as the nose on one's face

It will come as a surprise that so many that we term common usage and even cliché were first introduced by Shakespeare. They should be asked, too, to watch for Shakespearean allusion in ads, articles, cartoons, news headings or columns. The bulletin board will be quickly filled! Use of amusing montages, like "Shakespeare at the Ball Park," can also illustrate how widespread and assimilated are the expressions Shakespeare originated.

4) Give out a short passage for paraphrase, for example the following from *Hamlet:*

> Horatio, if thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity a while
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story.

The likelihood is that students will find their paraphrase longer and far more clumsy than the original, surely a commentary on Shakespeare's economy and facility of expression!

5) Try the exercise suggested by Ciardi in *How Does a Poem Mean?* of studying a specific soliloquy primarily for its series of word choices and images, particularly its use of verbs. Students will probably quickly learn, as Ciardi declares, that ". . . the passage certainly gives off a sense that English cannot be better selected than this."[7]

6) Ask students to memorize! It is very popular to condemn memorization as the bane of English students, the curse of the program. Yet, those persons who most vocally deplore the assignment are also most proficient in delivering the very lines which they purportedly resented having to commit to the treasure-house of memory and the enrichment of their oratory. Surely it is through Shakespeare, above all, we acquire the sound of great poetic language and acquire the standard by which to measure our own limited rhetorical range.

[7]John Ciardi, *How Does A Poem Mean?* (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1959), p. 785.

Of course, verse analysis must never become so laborious that students feel they are making no headway in the play. Assignments of close paraphrasing and analysis should therefore be tastefully varied and spaced, but never omitted.

The Problem of Emphasis

Those who have taught Shakespeare over a period of years recognize how rewarding recurrent experiences have proven to be, for each rereading with different classes brings new insights and values. On the other hand, how dangerous it is to assume that every student will gain as much from a first contact. The solution, then, is to suggest, not exhaust, the possibilities of a particular play, to make it rewarding enough that the student will want of his own accord to return to it for rereading or to go out of his way to attend an actual performance. Most teachers spend perhaps too much time on a single play and do too much for the students, so that they fail to acquire the skills necessary for independent exploration in other Shakespearean works. Three to five weeks is ample time for most works used in high school and is actually all that can be reasonably afforded in the already overcrowded English program. And fourteen to eighteen weeks on Shakespeare throughout the high school years is perhaps a maximum allocation in view of other demands. However, since the major themes of Shakespeare's play recur in literature of all periods, the teacher has the opportunity frequently to refer back to the works studied earlier and thus revive their significance and applicability. Not without warrant has it been said Shakespeare's plays were "for all time."

Some Practical Considerations

Theorizing is always pleasant, implementation more painful. A few practical considerations might then be in order, even though controversial, to suggest some ways to save time and cope more directly with the problems previously discussed:

1) The injunction "The student's first contact with drama should not be Shakespeare" is practical and sound. The teaching of Shakespeare should never be done exclusive of or in total isolation from the teaching of drama of other periods. Neither should the total drama program of a high school, as so often occurs, be only Shakespeare! Using comparative classics, incorporating plays in units other than those dealing exclusively with drama, and devising a sequential drama program in which Shakespeare forms a significant but not exclusive part are some ways of restoring Shakespeare to the mainstream of the dramatic tradition.

2) Biography, textual studies, history, psychology, literary criticism and history, philosophy, and sociology should be kept subordinate to study of the play itself. Surely it is important to perceive that Shakespeare adapted his material to the stage he was working with, that he perhaps catered to the Tudor family in his view of monarchy and the Yorkist/Lancastrian feuds, that he reflected the superstitions and world view of his time. Yet, the play itself should come first, with other knowledge brought in to enhance and illuminate, never replace.

3) Those Shakespearean works requiring greater maturity and sensitivity for appreciation should be left to college classes. *Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, probably fall in this classification, both requiring a particularly adult perception of the experiences of parenthood, married love, old age, disillusionment, cynicism.

4) While it is surely not the role of the high school to sample the full Shakespearean range, perhaps the concentration on tragedy is a little overheavy in the high school curriculm to the neglect of the comedies, fantasies,

and history plays. Some publishers of late have very helpfully begun to combine contrasting types in a joint edition, for example *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*, or have provided a Shakespeare "sampler" in the anthology or poetry collection, whereby students can experience Shakespeare's various styles and become familiar with the more famous speeches and songs. If anything must be sacrificed, however, it should not be the tragedies!

5) The teaching of Shakespeare must not be cheapened by simplified texts or comic-book adaptations, just as the appreciation of a symphony cannot be won by studying the score of a popular song based on a movement's dominant theme. We may, indeed, have to concede that Shakespeare is "caviar" to some and forever beyond reach. Students who can't handle the regular textbook surely will not gain edification from Shakespeare, however earnestly and dramatically the teacher attempts to spoonfeed it line by line, and would do better to study something else.

6) Assignments should be planned to develop reading, writing, and speaking proficiencies, not skills better developed in other courses. As English teachers, our primary goal must always be to confront students with the English language in all its richness and diversity. Creativity can be cultivated as well through written and oral assignments as through artistic projects.

7) Students should surely be given opportunity to read passages aloud and perform sections, but not to the endless boredom of other class members or to the desecration of the given text. Perhaps too much classroom time is presently given over to indiscriminate or unprepared student reading. Students might be better assigned to prepare "key scenes" from contemporary plays and work up gradually to the Shakespearean scenes, which can be best illuminated at first by professional actors on record and film or by the teacher himself.

8) The drama program in the high school should be planned sequentially, so that the same activities and preliminaries are not repeated year after year. While some gifted eighth graders may be ready for Shakespearean comedy, the likelihood is that Shakespeare is best introduced to better groups in grade 9, regular students in grade 10. The first encounter with Shakespeare justifiably requires more attention to background—the nature of the theater, the playwright, and the dramatic conventions of the period in which he wrote. Replication of the same material in succeeding years, however, is wasteful when a brief review could suffice. While the sophomore encountering *Julius Caesar* will have all he can do to come to first grips with blank verse, soliloquies, asides, character change, and application to contemporary political and social life, the junior, perhaps in his study of *Macbeth*, should be expected to concentrate more on characterization, dramatic structure, metaphor. In turn, the senior, probing the mystery of *Hamlet*, should be ready to explore more deeply the concept of tragedy, the humanistic view of man, the paradoxical oppositions of good and evil, reality and illusion, "beauty and the bestial."[8] However elementary it sounds, we need to be reminded that an effective drama program builds upon, deepens, and extends the work of preceding years.

9) The study of Shakespeare, as much as possible, should be combined with trips to actual productions. With the current renaissance of Shakespearean productions, on TV and in community and college theaters, opportunities are surely not lacking, even if a field trip has to be arranged to a nearby city. Of course, recordings, colorful bulletin boards, and pertinent books and articles should be

[8] "To Man from Mankind's Heart," p. 68.

made tastefully and generously available, not only to illuminate the particular play under study, but to extend interest to other Shakespearean works as well. Some schools have very effectively arranged a record-loaning system whereby students can check out records for home use or listen to them during free periods. Of indispensable value, too, are the brilliant humanities films, especially those on *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*.

10) The study of a Shakespearean play is perhaps best preceded by some concentrated study of poetry, both Shakespearean and other. Passages from various Shakespearean plays as well as the one under study could be effectively isolated for study, thus developing some of the reading skills needed for the later unit. In addition, problems of vocabulary could also be anticipated and handled in advance, rather than taken up only at the time of discussion. Far too often, students complete a Shakespearean unit oblivious of the fact that they have been dealing with some of the greatest poetry in the English language, great particularly because of the way it has served the multiple purposes of the play.

However, strong our background and scholarship, we often forge ahead in our teaching of Shakespeare with ambivalent attitudes—feeling virtuous in our endeavors, yet guilty of our failures and not fully convinced that the effort is really worth our while. We would do far better to refrain from any apologies and proceed in our work assured "that Shakespeare is a very great artist; that if he does not reach us it is not his fault but our own; that he is now beyond judgment; and that he is worth a good deal of the concentrated and prolonged attention reserved for greatness."[9] To be sure, we shall often end our unit with the despairing recognition that some students will never make "ups nor downs" of Shakespeare. Yet, our work will be rewarded by those students who have caught, if only incompletely, a sense of the complexity, variousness, richness, and universality of this drama which transcended its age and indeed all time.

[9]Robert B. Heilman, "Bardolatry," *Yale Review*, 50 (December 1960), p. 265.